

Our Vision

A dynamic and prosperous West in a strong Canada.

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A leading source of strategic insight, conducting and communicating non-partisan economic and public policy research of importance to the four western provinces and all Canadians.

**Picking Winners:
Provincial Electoral Reform Efforts, 2003-2009**

Evan Wilson
September 2009



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THE WEST IN CANADA PROJECT

Canada is a wonderfully diverse country with its people spread across the second largest nation-state in the world. There are many things that tie us together as Canadians, but there is no doubt that each part of the country is unique and brings a different set of characteristics and perspectives to the national table. Understanding and integrating this diversity is a challenge as big as Canada itself.

Western Canada—British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—form one of many distinct regions within Canada. The West is no more homogenous than any other region or sub-region, but there is an abundance of features that tie the four western provinces together in special ways. Shedding light on this region, communicating its frustrations and aspirations to the national community, seeking ways to build on the common ground found in the West, and weaving the region into the national whole are the goals of the West in Canada Project. The project, like the Canada West Foundation, is based on the idea that strong and prosperous regions make for a strong and prosperous Canada.

For more information about the West in Canada Project, please contact Robert Roach (roach@cwf.ca).



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PREFACE

There are few things in a liberal democracy as important as how elected representatives are selected. While there are at least as many electoral systems as there are democracies, Canadians have generally stuck with the rather awkwardly named “first-past-the-post” method.

In a first-past-the-post system, a candidate for office wins a seat in the legislature by getting more votes than any other candidate running for the same seat. It is winner-take-all and you don’t need to get a majority to win. All you need is more votes than the next closest candidate.

Say that there are three candidates running for a particular seat—the victor can win the seat with as little as 34% of the popular vote (rounding to the nearest whole number). Indeed, it is typical in Canada for a party to win a majority of seats with only a minority of the popular vote.

An alternative to first-past-the-post that is quite popular in democracies around the world is called proportional representation. This can take many forms, but the basic idea is that the legislative results reflect the proportion of votes cast. For example, if 40% of people vote for Party A, 35% for Party B and 25% for Party C, then each party gets the same percentage of seats in the legislature as its share of the popular vote.

To those used to first-past-the-post elections and the majority governments they tend to produce (the current minority government in Ottawa notwithstanding), this seems like a recipe for legislative chaos. For those who feel that the current approach is unfair, it promises to right the wrongs of a system in which a minority of votes can yield a majority of seats.

Into this mix, British Columbia launched one of the most innovative exercises in citizen participation in Canadian history when it created the Citizens’ Assembly for Electoral Reform with a mandate to “assess all possible models for electing MLAs, including preferential ballots, proportional representation, and our current electoral system.” The BC government then put its money where its mouth was and held two referendums to see if the people of BC were in favour of the Assembly’s recommendation to switch to a system of proportional representation.

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Significant reform efforts have also taken place in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

All of these efforts failed. For whatever reason, change was stymied. Legislators in BC, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and PEI are still elected using the first-past-the-post method. What happened in each of these five jurisdictions is the topic of this report.

Because of these failures, significant electoral reform efforts in the five provinces, and likely in the rest of country, are on hold for the foreseeable future. Who wants to lead the charge in BC for a third referendum when the second one was a worse defeat for proportional representation than the first? Who wants to argue that Canadians are hungry for proportional representation when the last five attempts at reform fizzled? Despite this, I wouldn't count out proportional representation just yet.

Arguably, it is less important that the reform efforts failed and more important that the issue of reform got some valuable policy screen time. One could argue that the two referendums on electoral reform in BC were a waste of time because nothing changed. However, the issue received attention and that, in itself, is valuable in a democracy. The pros and cons of electoral reform may not be discussed at coffee shops on a daily basis, but the five reform efforts outlined in this report demonstrate that critical thinking about our system of government is not dead in Canada.

In addition, the citizen engagement template provided by the BC Citizens' Assembly should not be discarded because its recommendation did not become law. The process was a shot in the arm for democracy and one that should be considered for use in other circumstances.

This report provides a record of this very interesting phase of democratic debate in Canada. It is aimed at students, scholars, bureaucrats, politicians and anyone who has an interest in electoral reform in Canada.



Robert Roach
Director of the West in Canada Project
August 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, Canadian Members of Parliament and members of provincial legislative assemblies are elected using a **single member plurality** (SMP) electoral system. (SMP is also known as **first-past-the-post**.) Save for the limited use of alternative methods in Manitoba and Alberta during the first half of the 20th century,¹ this system has been used throughout the country since Confederation. A reflection of the country's British roots, the Canadian electoral system is based upon that used at Westminster.

As electoral systems go, SMP is quite simple. Under its rules, the country (or province) is divided into a set of territorially-defined electoral districts within which local elections are held. The candidate who receives the largest number of votes in his or her district represents that district in the legislature. Subsequently, the party controlling the greatest number of seats in the legislature forms the government, and its leader serves as Prime Minister (or Premier).

SMP systems are often lauded for their simplicity, for their tendency to produce majority governments, and for the accountability they provide. Unlike some forms of proportional representation, in which complicated calculations are necessary to determine seat distribution, the SMP candidate who wins the largest number of votes in a particular riding is awarded the seat for that riding.

Because only a plurality of votes, rather than a majority, is necessary to win a seat, a party can win a majority of seats with less than 50% of the popular

¹ Between 1920 and 1955, members of the Manitoba provincial legislature from Winnipeg were elected using the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Beginning in 1924, rural MLAs were elected using the Alternative Vote (AV). The use of AV also ended in 1955. During nearly the same time frame, from 1924 to 1956, urban Albertans used STV to elect their MLAs. British Columbia also experimented with electoral reform, switching briefly to AV province-wide in 1951, before switching back to single member plurality in 1955. For more background on these experiences, consult Jansen 2004.

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SMP often also rewards strong local support at the expense of broad national support.

vote, making majority governments more likely. The system is considered to be more accountable because majority governments make it easier to assign responsibility for policy choices and because local representation makes it possible for local voters to hold individual legislators to account.

Despite these advantages, SMP has not been without controversy in Canada, both federally and provincially. The most common critique against the system is that it does not create assemblies that represent the full range of voter preferences. Some parties win a much larger share of seats than their share of the popular vote warrants,² while others are often left without any seats to show for the votes cast in their favour.

Additionally, because it focuses on local candidates, SMP often also rewards strong local support at the expense of broad national support, contributing to deepened regional cleavages, especially at Canada's federal level. Although the Bloc Québécois is often cited as the beneficiary of such bias, it is also evident in the Conservative Party domination of the western provinces and Liberal strength in many Canadian cities.

Not only is SMP critiqued for these direct effects on election outcomes, but also because such effects are thought to lead to lower levels of voter turnout than in countries employing other systems. The sense that your vote does not count if you are not voting for the dominant party or parties in a riding combined with the regional domination of certain parties frustrates electors and gives cause for some to stay home on election day.

In Canada, reformers often advocate for **proportional representation** (PR) systems. These systems are purported to remedy the most critical of SMP's flaws by distributing seats in proportion to party vote shares, and, additionally, fostering minority governments, which are forced to include a wider variety of perspectives in the decision-making process. As it happens, Canadian

² See Peter Russell's *Two Cheers for Minority Government* for a discussion of the democratic tension between share of the popular vote and seat distribution.

Proportional representation could achieve the goal of reducing regional cleavages without prying open the Constitution.

reformers have typically advocated for **mixed member plurality systems**, hoping to combine the advantages of PR systems with the local representation provided by SMP.

Because they would introduce a stronger element of proportionality to electoral results, both PR and mixed electoral systems have the potential to reduce regionalism in the House of Commons, giving both Alberta Liberals and Toronto Conservatives stronger voices. From this perspective, no longer would westerners elect only a single party and rely on that party's performance for parliamentary representation. Unlike reforming the Senate to improve regional representation, this option could achieve the goal of reducing regional cleavages without prying open the Constitution.

To date, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have each introduced unique electoral reform proposals. Most recently, the BC General Election of May 12, 2009 was paired with a referendum on electoral reform. British Columbians were asked whether they would prefer to continue using SMP or to replace it with BC-STV, a version of the **Single Transferable Vote** (STV) form of proportional representation.

The electorate rejected BC-STV, as only 38.75% of voters chose it over the traditional SMP system (Elections British Columbia 2009b). This was not only British Columbia's second failed referendum on electoral reform, but also the fifth failure of provincial reform plans in Canada, raising concern about the viability of future efforts. At this time, none of the five provinces have any further plans for electoral reform, and the remaining jurisdictions have yet to launch any reform efforts. The current dearth of provincial reform efforts suggests that electoral reform is not likely to occur at the federal level in the short-term. This review of electoral reform proposals concludes with a brief discussion of why that is likely to be the case.³

³ Unless otherwise noted, these overviews have been compiled using the reports released at each step of the individual reform efforts. Please consult the "Sources" section for a full list of reports that were consulted in compiling this review.

2. BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 1996, British Columbia's New Democratic Party formed a majority government, capturing 40% of the popular vote and winning 39 of 75 seats (Elections British Columbia 1997). The opposition Liberals, on the other hand, were awarded only 33 seats, despite receiving 42% of the popular vote—a larger share than the governing party.

Consequently, the BC Liberal Party platform for the 2001 election included a promise to convene a Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (BC Liberal Party 2001). This assembly was mandated to consult the public and assess alternative methods for electing Members of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia. Any recommendations put forth by the Assembly would become the subject of a binding referendum.

The Liberals won the 2001 election by the largest margin in provincial history, capturing 77 of 79 seats (Elections British Columbia 2001). Fulfilling their promise, the government tabled the mandate for the Citizens' Assembly in December 2002. Members were chosen at random from the electoral rolls beginning in September 2003. One female and one male were chosen at random from each of the province's 79 constituencies, in addition to a male and a female member from BC's Aboriginal community at large.

The subsequent process was divided into three distinct phases, held throughout the course of a year: a Learning Phase, running from January 11 to March 26, 2004; a Public Hearings Phase, held in May and June 2004; and a Deliberation Phase, held in November 2004.

The Learning Phase involved six weekend-long sessions in which Assembly members were given a crash course in electoral systems via a combination of lectures, readings and group discussions. At the conclusion of this phase the Assembly released the Preliminary Statement to the People of British Columbia on March 21, 2004. This statement summarized their goals and progress, presenting the members' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of SMP systems. The Statement concluded with a solicitation for the opinions of concerned citizens, informing them of the upcoming Public Hearing Phase.

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The Public Hearing Phase consisted of 50 open meetings held across the province throughout the months of May and June 2004. Hearings were scheduled so that every British Columbian would be within an hour and a half drive to at least one meeting. Those who could not attend any public events were invited to submit their proposals online or by mail. All told, the Assembly received 383 public presentations and a further 1,603 online submissions.

Assembly members were then given the summer months to process the mass of submissions, reconvening in November 2004 to begin the Deliberation Phase, which would conclude with the recommendation of a new system and a referendum question. Assembly members began this phase by developing the “basic values” that they would use to design and evaluate the system that would be recommended to the electorate, including:

- “fair election results through proportionality”;
- “effective local representation”; and
- “greater voter choice” (British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform 2004b).

These values guided deliberation concerning two electoral systems: **Mixed Member Proportional** (MMP) and **Single Transferable Vote** (STV). This discussion led to debates concerning the balance of power between voters and political parties. Consensus gathered around the conclusion that the creation of stable majority governments should not be the driving concern behind any choice.

After this discussion, votes were held among Assembly members that resulted in the Assembly recommending STV to BC voters.

The Assembly’s customization of STV was referred to as BC-STV. BC-STV would have **district magnitudes** varying from two to seven members, depending on the size and population density of the individual districts. Furthermore, BC-STV would employ the **Droop quota** to calculate the number of votes necessary to win a seat. Any surplus votes are distributed using the **Weighted Inclusive Gregory method**, which redistributes voters’ subsequent preferences to other candidates at an equivalent, reduced weight, rather than picked at random or left over once a candidate’s quota has been met.

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In the 2005 election, only one of two thresholds was met. Although a majority of voters in 77 constituencies supported the adoption of BC-STV, only 57.69% of voters did so province-wide.

The referendum question recommended by the Citizens' Assembly asked: "Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform?" The province's *Electoral Reform Referendum Act* established two thresholds for the referendum to succeed on May 17, 2005: the support of 60% of voters *and* majority support in 60% of constituencies (48 of 79).

While the Act did not mandate roles for official "Yes" or "No" committees, it did establish a Referendum Information Office, tasked with providing neutral, nonpartisan information to voters. Both the BC Liberals and the New Democratic Party remained neutral on the referendum question.

Two independent groups emerged to wage the referendum campaign, *British Columbians for BC-STV* in support of the new electoral system and *KNOW STV* in opposition. *British Columbians for BC-STV* contested that the current SMP system was flawed and divisive, causing instability, polarization and policy swings. They argued that BC-STV would eliminate these concerns, because its "fairer" results would engender stable, more accountable government (Elections British Columbia 2009a).⁴

KNOW STV, like British Columbians for BC-STV, felt that SMP should be replaced with a more appropriate electoral system. However, their campaign stressed that BC-STV would not fulfill expectations for making government more accountable. KNOW STV advocated for some manner of electoral reform, but warned that accepting BC-STV would prevent the development of a system more appropriate for the province. KNOW STV argued that the proposed system was too complicated and that without access to even preliminary BC-STV constituency maps, the potential effects of the new system could not be predicted.

⁴ Although these quotations are pulled from *British Columbians for BC-STV's* 2009 statement, it is commonly observed that both 2005 and 2009 campaigns were based upon similar arguments.

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Despite the increased effort to educate citizens on the proposed reforms, support did not meet either threshold, as voters firmly rejected the BC-STV system in 2009.

On election day, only one of the two thresholds was met. Although a majority of voters in 77 constituencies supported the adoption of BC-STV, only 57.69% of voters did so province-wide. Because the 60% threshold was not met, SMP would be preserved (Elections British Columbia 2005).

In the September 2005 Throne Speech, the Liberal government acknowledged the public's support for BC-STV, despite the referendum's failure. While they would respect the results, the government announced a second referendum on electoral reform, to be held concurrently with the 2008 municipal elections.

Referring to evidence that a lack of awareness led to the failure of the first referendum, the government introduced a number of efforts intended to educate voters about electoral reform. Foremost among these efforts was the distribution of \$1 million in funding to official proponent and opponent campaigns, in addition to the reintroduction of the neutral Referendum Information Office.

Additionally, an Electoral Boundaries Commission was created and mandated to re-draw the provincial electoral map optimized for 85 MLAs under SMP, and to create a new STV-style electoral map that would be implemented in the event of a successful referendum. Districting turned out to be a more complex task than anticipated, and the referendum was postponed until the next provincial election, to be held on May 12, 2009. This would not only allow enough time for work to be completed, but allowed the referendum to be administrated more cost-effectively.

On May 12, British Columbian voters were asked "Which electoral system should British Columbia use to elect members to the provincial Legislative Assembly?" and given the option of "The existing electoral system (First-Past-the-Post)" or the "Single transferable vote electoral system (BC-STV) proposed by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform."

Funding for official referendum campaigns was distributed to successors of the two highest-profile groups from the previous referendum. British Columbians

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for BC STV collected the \$500,000 guaranteed to a proponent group, while NO STV, the successor to KNOW STV, was given an equal amount as the opponent group. For the most part, both groups followed the same line of argument as in 2005, albeit with access to more funding.

However, the introduction of an electoral map designed specifically for BC-STV provided NO STV with the information necessary for a much more effective campaign. Rather than warning voters that they did not know what the constituencies would look like, NO STV now argued that the new ridings were much too large to provide voters with effective representation or accountability. Additionally, increased riding sizes would necessitate significant financial resources, pushing candidates to become more closely connected to well-funded political parties (NO STV 2009).

Despite the increased effort to educate citizens on the proposed reforms, support did not meet either threshold, as voters firmly rejected the BC-STV system. Only 38.7% of valid votes were cast in favour of the new system and it found majority support in only seven of the province's 85 constituencies (Elections British Columbia 2009b). As a result, British Columbia once again retained its traditional SMP system.

3. ONTARIO

The Ontario Liberal Party's 2003 election platform included an extensive plan for improving the quality of democracy in that province. The centerpiece was the introduction of fixed election dates and public consultation regarding a new electoral system (Ontario Liberal Party 2003). In November 2004, the McGuinty government fulfilled this promise by announcing an "aggressive agenda to strengthen democracy" (Office of the Premier, Ontario 2004). This agenda would introduce legislation to fix election dates, tighten government finance laws, submit the public sector to more systematic auditing, and establish an Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

The following June, Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs) from each party were convened to form the Select Committee on Electoral Reform, which studied electoral systems and developed the terms of reference for the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. In November, this

Select Committee tabled a report recommending a process similar to that used by British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly. Additionally, the Committee enumerated a series of principles intended to guide all Assembly discussions and deliberations, including legitimacy, fairness of representation, voter choice, effective parties, stable and effective government, effective Parliament, stronger voter participation, and accountability (Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat 2007a).

On March 24, 2006, the Ontario legislature amended the *Elections Act*, taking into account the Committee's recommendation and launching the Citizens' Assembly. Elections Ontario chose 103 Assembly members at random from the electors' list, with a single member selected from each constituency. The overall composition was mandated to include 52 women, 51 men, and **at least** one Aboriginal member of either gender.

The work of the Assembly began in September 2006, and continued until May 15, 2007, the due date for the Final Report. As with the BC Citizens' Assembly, this work was divided into three phases: the Learning Phase, the Consultation Phase, and the Deliberation Phase.

The Learning Phase ran from September to November 2006, with a structure again borrowed from BC: six weekends of lectures, discussion groups and readings intended to provide Assembly members with a crash course in electoral systems. During this phase, Assembly members added two more guiding principles to those outlined by the Select Committee on Electoral Reform: simplicity and practicality (ibid.).

Because of the Citizens' Assembly's tight timelines, the Consultation Phase overlapped with the Learning Phase, beginning in November 2006 and continuing to February 2007. Between the 41 public consultation meetings, four "special outreach" meetings, and avenues for written submissions via the Internet and the postal service, the Consultation Phase received 1,537 contributions.

Following the public consultations, the Assembly reconvened in February 2007 for six weekends of deliberation. Guided by feedback from the Consultation Phase and expertise gleaned from the Learning Phase, the Assembly

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developed three objectives, against which all major electoral system families would be evaluated:

- Voter choice – “Voters should be able to indicate their preferred candidate and their preferred party” (ibid. 103)
- Fair election results – “The number of seats a party wins should more closely reflect its share of the party vote” (ibid.).
- Strong local representation – “Each geographic area of the province should have at least one representative” (ibid.).

Deliberations, framed by these objectives, centred upon the recommendation of either a MMP or a STV system. At the conclusion of these discussions, three formal, secret votes were cast in order to determine which system would be recommended to the voters of Ontario. The first ballot asked Assembly members whether they preferred the MMP or STV system. The MMP system was the preferred system on this ballot, thus members were subsequently asked whether they preferred it to the province’s current SMP system. When members indicated support for MMP, they were asked whether they would recommend MMP to the people of Ontario. A majority of Assembly members voted to recommend MMP to Ontarians, and that system was recommended in the final report submitted on May 15, 2007.

The details of the recommended MMP system were designed specifically with Ontario voters in mind. This new system would elect 129 MPPs, 90 of whom would be local members chosen via plurality rules and 39 of whom would be chosen as proportional top-up from closed party lists, distributed via a **Hare Quota**.⁵ This top-up would be limited to those parties surpassing a threshold of 3% of the popular vote.

The Ontario Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended that a yes/no question be used in the referendum on electoral reform to be held in

⁵ This would result in a 70/30 split between plurality and proportional seats, a ratio that the Assembly recommended should stay constant if more plurality seats were added.

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In the aftermath of the referendum, it was suggested that many voters did not fully understand the proposed MMP system, making them more susceptible to the “No” campaign.

conjunction with the October 10, 2007 provincial general election. Instead, the McGuinty Cabinet decided that Ontario voters would be asked “Which electoral system should Ontario use to elect members to the provincial legislature?” and given the choice between “The existing electoral system (First-Past-the-Post)” and “The alternative electoral system proposed by the Citizens’ Assembly (Mixed Member Proportional).”

Setting two thresholds for the success of the referendum, the Ontario government again followed the lead of British Columbia. In order for MMP to be adopted, the referendum needed the support from majorities in 60% of the province’s 107 constituencies⁶ and from 60% of all valid votes cast.

Of the parties sitting at Queen’s Park, the Progressive Conservatives opposed the proposals and the New Democrats supported it. The governing Liberal Party took no official position, but had MPPs publicly supporting both sides of the debate. The Ontario government set aside \$6.8 million for Elections Ontario to conduct a neutral education campaign, which focused primarily on television advertising, direct mail and web promotion (CBC News 2007a). No special funding was provided for official proponent and opponent groups.

Despite the lack of government funding, high-profile groups emerged on both sides of the referendum question. The “Yes” campaign was spearheaded by *Fair Vote Canada/Fair Vote Ontario*, who campaigned to emphasize the enhanced representativeness and proportionality provided by MMP. They argued that the increased proportionality would also increase voter choice, as smaller parties would emerge, taking advantage of their increased likelihood of election (Vote for MMP Campaign 2007).

⁶ These 107 seats were redistributed as of the general election of October 10, 2007, up from 103.

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The “No” campaign was led by **No MMP**, who argued against the introduction of MMP with a number of critiques, including increased party discipline, reduction in the number of local constituencies, the confusing ballot, the increased legislature size, and the power that would be accorded to so-called “fringe” parties (No MMP 2009).

On October 10, 2007, neither of the two thresholds was met, and SMP would endure as Ontario’s electoral system. In total, 63.1% of valid votes were cast in favour of retaining the current system, while only 36.9% supported the introduction of MMP. Additionally, a majority of voters in only five ridings supported MMP, with SMP carrying the rest (Elections Ontario 2007). In the aftermath of the referendum, it was suggested that many voters did not fully understand the proposed MMP system, making them more susceptible to the “No” campaign than had they fully understood the consequences of the new system (CBC News 2007b). Whether this was a deciding factor or not, the No side experienced victory in Ontario, and there are no further plans for referenda on the topic.

4. QUEBEC

In comparison to BC and Ontario, the electoral reform process in Quebec was chaotic. Although the province had introduced several abortive attempts at reform during the 1960s and 1970s, the most recent efforts were kick-started in response to the November 1998 general election. Having won 76 of 125 seats with 42.9% of the vote, the Parti Québécois formed the government in that year. However, the 43.5% of the popular vote earned by the Liberal Party was sufficient only to grant them Official Opposition status, with 48 of 125 seats. The Action démocratique de Québec was similarly underrepresented, awarded only one seat for their 11.8% share of the vote (Milner 2004).

These results spurred a group called le Mouvement pour une démocratie nouvelle (MDN) to compile a petition demanding democratic reform in the province. In October 2001, the MDN presented the National Assembly with the signatures of 125 notable Quebec personalities, including former Members of the National Assembly (MNAs), Members of Parliament, premiers, and senior civil servants (ibid.).

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In response, Premier Bernard Landry convened an Estates General on the Reform of Democratic Institutions, intended to “stimulate reflection and initiate a public debate” (Minister for the Reform of Democratic Institutions, Quebec 2002, 37) about the quality of democracy in Quebec. Throughout the summer and fall of 2002, the Estates General toured 20 communities throughout the province, holding 27 public hearings to discuss issues of democratic reform raised by an Estates General briefing paper entitled *Citizen Empowerment: A Paper to Open Public Debate*. These public consultations concluded in February 2003 with a final workshop, attended by nearly 1,000 delegates. At the workshop, delegates discussed everything from fixed election dates to term limits to voting age, in addition to electoral system reform.

In March 2003, the Estates General released their final report, entitled *Take Your Rightful Place: Report of the Organizing Committee of the Estates General on the Reform of Democratic Institutions*. The Estates General recommended that the government hold a referendum asking Québécois whether they would approve of the replacement of SMP with a proportional representation system called **panachage**, the system employed in Switzerland and Luxembourg.

Under this proposal, the National Assembly would be populated by 125 MNAs, elected proportionally from a number of regional districts. Parties would nominate a list of candidates in each district; electors could either vote for the full slate of a preferred party or pick and choose among their preferred candidates. Seats would be distributed to parties based on their proportional share of the vote in each district, and the MNAs sent by the party would be determined according to voter preference. For instance, if Party A is entitled to three seats, Party A’s three most popular candidates would be given seats in the National Assembly.

However, this referendum was never held. Two days after the Estates General submitted their final report, Premier Landry called a provincial election, which he lost. Although the new Liberal Premier, Jean Charest, made a commitment to democratic reform during the campaign, he ignored the recommendations of the Estates General. Instead, Charest announced the creation of a Minister Responsible for the Reform of Democratic Institutions.

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In June 2004, this minister, Jacques Dupuis, introduced a summary of 140 proposed institutional reforms intended to strengthen the relationships between citizens, the National Assembly, and the government. Among these proposals was a promise of electoral reform. Subsequently, a draft bill entitled "A Comprehensive Plan to Reform Democratic Institutions" was tabled on December 15, 2004. This bill proposed a compensatory proportional system referred to as a "mixed proportional system." Unlike the proportional systems considered in BC and Ontario, this was not the recommendation of a Citizens' Assembly. Instead, it was based on a working paper by University of Montreal political scientist Louis Massicotte, who was mandated to recommend a mixed electoral system appropriate for Quebec.

As outlined by the draft bill, this mixed proportional system would elect 127 MNAs, 77 of whom would be elected from territorial "divisions" under plurality rules and 50 of whom would be elected proportionally in 24 to 27 "districts" using the **d'Hondt method**. Unlike the MMP proposal in Ontario, electors would cast only a single vote. This vote would be used simultaneously to elect candidates in the divisions via plurality and to determine the distribution of the proportional district seats. Rather than being chosen from an ordered list, MNAs in the proportional districts would be populated from the ranks of they parties' losing candidates; those losing candidates with the largest vote totals would be used to fill a party's proportional seats. Unlike mixed systems that give electors two separate votes, this ballot would not allow electors to split their ballot and count on a proportional seat for the smaller party of their choice. This gives a distinct advantage to major parties over weaker third parties.

In June 2005, a **Select Committee on the Elections Act** was mandated to debate and discuss the mixed system proposed in the "Comprehensive Plan to Reform Democratic Institutions" in a "non-partisan way and on a consultative basis" (Acharid et al. 2006, 5). This Committee would consist of nine MNAs, accompanied by eight citizens selected from across the province, referred to as the "Citizens' Committee." Once convened, the Select Committee visited 16 cities across the province, publicly consulting citizens for their opinions on the proposal, in addition to soliciting Internet and postal submissions.

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Less than a month after the Chief Electoral Officer's report was released, the Government of Quebec announced that electoral reform initiatives in the province would be abandoned.

Six of the eight Citizens' Committee members submitted a report to the National Assembly in April 2006, rejecting the Massicotte proposal. The report argued that the use of a single vote would encourage the practice of strategic voting and siphon support for minor political parties. As a result, the proposed system did not meet their standard of effective representation and vote equality.

In place of the "mixed proportional system," the Citizens' Committee recommended a two-vote MMP system. In this system, 60% of the representatives in the 125-seat National Assembly would be elected locally via plurality vote and the other 40% would be elected based on the **Sainte-Laguë method**, as applied to a separate party-list vote. This method would guarantee each region at least three MNAs, with the proportional seats distributed among the regions so that, overall, the parties would be represented in equal proportion to their provincial share of the party vote. Additionally, a 5% threshold was introduced to prevent fringe parties from entering the National Assembly and holding the balance of power.

In response, the Government of Quebec asked the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to investigate whether the draft bill and the Citizens' Committee's recommendations would produce systematically different election results. The CEO was asked to test a number of different features of mixed systems to determine their effect upon proportionality, representation of women and minorities, regional representation, and the representation of small parties in the National Assembly. Among the features tested using statistical simulation were regional versus national compensation, electoral thresholds, the number of votes per ballot, the distribution of local versus party list seats, and the method used to calculate proportional distribution.

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The Commission was given a broad mandate for reform, focusing not only on electoral reform, but also invited to recommend legislative reforms that would increase the accountability of MLAs.

Stressing that he was not recommending any one system over any others, the CEO observed systematically different results depending on the features employed. Among his findings, released in December 2007, were claims that:

- National compensation of proportionality leads to more proportional results than does regional compensation.
- The fewer the number of distributive regions, the more likely it is that small parties will be compensated for their popular support.
- The **Hare method** of proportional seat distribution provides more proportional seat distribution and representation for small parties than any of the other methods recommended for Quebec.
- The higher the threshold for entry into the legislature, the less proportional the results. As thresholds climb from 2% to 5%, disproportionality is three times greater.
- Two-vote ballots give small parties a greater chance of joining the legislature than do single-vote ballots.

Less than a month after the Chief Electoral Officer's report was released, the Government of Quebec announced that electoral reform initiatives in the province would be abandoned. Not only was the government discouraged by the Select Committee deadlock, but the rejection of electoral reform initiatives in BC and Ontario in 2005 and 2007, respectively, discouraged the government from pursuing the initiative any further (La Presse, January 19, 2008).

5. NEW BRUNSWICK

Debate on electoral reform in New Brunswick was introduced in 2003 as one aspect of the Commission on Legislative Democracy, a democratic renewal package intended to make institutions “more fair, open, accountable, and accessible” (Commission on Legislative Democracy 2004d, 7). This package, which mandated recommendations on electoral, legislative and democratic reform, was a response to the decline in trust and confidence in political institutions that had been observed by the Lord government.

The nine-member Commission was given a broad mandate for reform, focusing not only on electoral reform, but also invited to recommend legislative reforms that would increase the accountability of MLAs to their constituents and democratic reforms, such as referenda. Established in December 2003, the Commission was given until December 31, 2004 to present its recommendations.

The terms of the Commission’s mandate with respect to electoral reform asked specifically for the recommendation of a proportional representation system that would “ensure fairer representation, greater equality of votes, an effective legislature and votes, and a continued role for directly-elected MLAs representing specific geographic boundaries” (ibid.17). Additionally, the Commission was also expected to develop any changes to the **Elections Act** necessary to accommodate the new system and to create a guide for future electoral boundary realignments. Finally, the Commission was solicited for ideas that could increase voter turnout, especially among young New Brunswickers.

The work of the Commission was divided into three phases: the Research Phase, the Consultation Phase, and the Deliberation Phase, during which the Commission would address all three aspects of the mandate. The Research Phase, much like the Learning Phases with the BC and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies, was intended to bring the civilian commissioners up to speed on the complexities of elections and legislative democracy. This phase consisted

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The Commission's final report argued that, despite the effective government and the local representation it provides, the SMP system needed to be replaced because it does not fulfill the need for fair representation and voter equality.

of a number of research conferences intended to stimulate debate between the commissioners, academics and policy experts.

Following the Research Phase was the Deliberation Phase, consisting of 14 public hearings, 11 Community Leader roundtables, and a number of targeted meetings directed toward specific communities of interest, such as young voters, women and francophones. These consultations were framed using three documents prepared by the Commission, including "Your Voice, Your Vote," "Your Voice, Your Vote, Your Choice," and "Options," which explained the Commission's mandate, institutional overviews, and the Commission's preliminary recommendations, respectively. These reports were distributed via email and through newspaper inserts. Discussions at these public meetings were supplemented by submissions made online and through the postal service, as well as by responses to questionnaires included with "Your Voice, Your Vote, Your Choice."

The Deliberation Phase of the New Brunswick Commission on Legislative Democracy was not a single, distinct phase of the work. Instead, deliberation took place throughout the entire process, both as commissioners discussed and debated what they had learned from the expert roundtables and academic conferences, and as they sorted through questionnaires, submissions and other feedback collected from the public forums. Deliberations on all topics were driven by the consideration of eight democratic values that were developed "early in [the Commission's] work," (ibid. 7) including fairness, equality, representativeness, openness, effectiveness, accountability, inclusiveness and choice.

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The Commission recommended that MMP only be employed for two consecutive elections, after which the system be reviewed, and, if necessary, abandoned or further reformed.

While deliberating, the Commission developed four key principles to propel discussion of electoral system reforms for New Brunswick, including local representation, fair representation, vote equality and effective government. By September 2004, they had settled, in broad strokes, on the recommendation of an MMP system. These preliminary recommendations, along with those for legislative and democratic reforms, were outlined in a document called “Options.” With “Options,” commissioners once more solicited feedback from New Brunswickers, this time regarding concrete proposals.

The Commission’s final report, released in December 2004, provided a fleshed-out MMP proposal, influenced by this public participation. With this final report, the Commission argued that, despite the effective government and the local representation it provides, the SMP system needed to be replaced because it does not fulfill the need for fair representation and voter equality. The recommended MMP system would preserve SMP’s strengths of effective government and local representativeness while introducing the fair representation and voter equality it lacks.

The Commission recommended that New Brunswickers would be best served by a two-vote MMP system that distributed 56 seats, including 36 for local MLAs elected by plurality rules and 20 chosen from closed party lists. List seats would ideally be distributed on a regional basis, as commissioners recommended that the province be divided into four districts, each one represented by five seats to be distributed proportionally using the **d’Hondt formula**. These list seats would be distributed among parties surpassing a threshold of 5% of the party list votes cast province-wide.

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Furthermore, the Commission recommended that voters be given the choice between SMP and the Commission's MMP system in a binding referendum held prior to the next provincial election. The timing would guarantee that MMP, if accepted, would be implemented by 2011, the date of New Brunswick's first fixed-date election, as recommended by the Commission on Legislative Democracy.

The Commission recommended that a referendum result in favour of MMP should not lead to its permanent adoption. Instead, they advised that MMP only be employed for two consecutive elections, after which the system be reviewed, and, if necessary, abandoned or further reformed.

Premier Lord accepted these recommendations for electoral reform in the official government response to the Commission on Legislative Democracy, released in June 2006. As per the recommendations, a new **Referendum Act** would be created that would allow New Brunswickers to choose between SMP and MMP in a binding referendum to be held along with municipal elections on May 12, 2008. Elections New Brunswick would be tasked with providing voters with the information necessary to make an informed decision. Additionally, official opponent and proponent committees would be granted \$400,000 each in funding. Provided that support for the reform surpassed a double majority threshold, the government had the intent of implementing the new system by the time of the next general election.

Soon after issuing this response, Premier Lord dropped the writ on a general election to be held on September 18, 2006. His Progressive Conservatives lost this election, and Liberal Party leader Shawn Graham was elected Premier. By June 2007, plans for electoral reform in New Brunswick were shelved when Premier Graham cancelled the planned referendum. While the Liberal Government response to the Commission on Legislative Democracy, released in June 2007, outlined a number of recommendations (and other reform initiatives) that would be implemented, Premier Graham stated that the "case for changing our electoral system to include elements of proportional representation has not yet been made" (Government of New Brunswick 2007, 6), giving only the vague promise of some further research down the road.

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In his final report, Justice Carruthers emphasized the importance of vote equality above nearly every other consideration, save for the claims of the provincial francophone minority and for efforts to balance rural concerns against urban ones.

6. PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Electoral reform efforts in Prince Edward Island involved three separate processes, with each successive step seeking a wider range of input. First was the one-man Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform, followed by the seven-member Commission on Prince Edwards Island's Electoral Future, and concluding with a potentially binding plebiscite, bringing the question of electoral reform to the province's voting population.

The Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform was announced in the November 2002 Throne Speech. The Commission was being created with the intent of "consider[ing] Prince Edward Island's electoral system and accompanying statutes and regulations so that it continues to reflect what Islanders require of their legislature" (Carruthers 2003b, 1). The three-pronged mandate for this Commission included a review of the province's election statutes, the impact of current boundaries on the Island's rural population, and whether the introduction of "an alternative electoral system, such as proportional representation" (ibid. 2) would be beneficial. A one-person Commission, consisting of former provincial Chief Justice Norman H. Carruthers (and a small staff), tended to this work between January and December 2003.

Justice Carruthers analyzed previous provincial electoral reform proposals, while simultaneously soliciting suggestions via advertisements in Island newspapers. Based on this research, Justice Carruthers released a discussion paper outlining three "families" of electoral systems in April 2003. This discussion paper was intended to teach the electorate about electoral systems and expose it to possible reforms that could be discussed at public

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hearings, concluding with four hypothetical designs for Island proportional representation systems.

Justice Carruthers then spent the months of May and June 2003 touring the province, speaking about his work at service clubs and secondary school classes, in order to raise the profile of electoral reform. Additionally, the commission held seven public meetings throughout the province during that same time, giving Islanders a series of opportunities to discuss electoral reform. One final meeting was held on November 20, 2003 in order to consult the public prior to the release of the Commission's final report.

In his final report, Justice Carruthers emphasized the importance of vote equality above nearly every other consideration, save for the claims of the provincial francophone minority and for efforts to balance rural concerns against urban ones. He considered both MMP and STV to be worthwhile replacements for SMP, feeling that both options enhanced vote equality while preserving regional representation and addressing these other considerations. Of the two systems, he recommended MMP as the most appropriate successor to the current system, because he felt that it more clearly emphasized the link between elector and elected. This emphasis would make it a much easier and a more acceptable "sell" to the residents of PEI.

Justice Carruthers, however, did not recommend the immediate introduction of MMP. Instead, his main recommendation was that the government create an independent commission that would further investigate and publicize the possible effects of an MMP system in PEI. This second commission would consist of members of the political parties and the greater voting public and its work would conclude with the development of a referendum question to be asked "at a time other than during a provincial election" (ibid. 103).

The Commission on Prince Edward Island's Electoral Future was mandated in response to Justice Carruthers' recommendations. Comprised of one member from each of PEI's three registered political parties and one voter from each of the province's four federal electoral districts, the Commission set to work designing an MMP system for PEI in February 2005. Once this task was complete, the Commission was to conduct a campaign highlighting

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The plebiscite results did not approach either threshold, earning support from only 36% of voters and rejected in all but two of the province's 27 constituencies.

the strengths and weaknesses of both SMP and MMP, concluding in a non-binding plebiscite in which Islanders could express their preference for one system over the other.

Between March and October 2005, the Commission held a series of 24 meetings where the documents released by the Carruthers Commission, along with papers released by other Canadian electoral reform initiatives, were discussed and debated. In addition, members attended a conference on electoral reform hosted at Mount Allison University in May of that year.

During this period, the Commission worked toward finalizing the details of an Island-centred MMP system. By June 2005, public meetings were held to discuss this new system at each of the 12 high schools across the province, all in preparation for a non-binding plebiscite to be held on November 28, 2005. These forums focused on voter education about the new system. In addition, a series of pamphlets were released and distributed throughout the province in the lead-up to the plebiscite.

The plebiscite question asked "Should Prince Edward Island change to a Mixed Member Proportional System as presented by the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future?" This MMP system gave electors two votes—one of which would elect members in one of 17 local plurality districts and another that would contribute to the distribution of 10 closed party list seats, determined according to the d'Hondt formula. The commission suggested a 5% threshold to include only those parties with some real support among voters. Additionally, candidates were required to run either as local candidates or list candidates, but not both simultaneously. This feature was adopted in response to concerns raised during the public forums.

As per the recommendation of the Commission, the public participated in a plebiscite held on November 28, 2005. This plebiscite would be binding

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Not only did the provinces converge around the use of citizen input, they also converged around the idea of a mixed member proportional system. Of the five provinces, only BC did not propose this system as the alternative to SMP.

only if it received support from more than 60% of voters and majority support in 60% of provincial constituencies. The plebiscite results did not approach either threshold, earning support from only 36% of voters and rejected in all but two of the province's 27 constituencies (Elections Prince Edward Island 2005). Not only was MMP soundly rejected, but turnout had plummeted nearly 50 percentage points since the previous provincial election—Prince Edward Islanders had soundly rejected the proposal. Premier Binns said “Islanders have quite clearly said they're not ready for a change at this particular time” (CBC News 2005), bringing an end to the question of electoral reform on Prince Edward Island.

7. POLICY EXPERIMENTATION

The five electoral reform efforts outlined in this report illustrate how policy initiatives can migrate from one jurisdiction to another. Provinces act like policy laboratories that produce results from which other provinces can learn. This is evident both in the convergence around citizen participation and around the choice of MMP systems.

The earliest serious discussions of electoral reform began in Prince Edward Island, Quebec and British Columbia, beginning in January, March, and April of 2003, respectively. At the outset, each province took a unique approach to electoral reform. In Prince Edward Island, a one-person, non-expert commission was struck to investigate reform possibilities. In Quebec, MNAs travelled to solicit opinions on the proposal of an academic expert. In BC, an assembly of regular citizens was convened with the intent to present voters with the system that they felt was best suited to the needs of the province.

Despite this diversity, the participatory aspects of BC's Citizens' Assembly were quickly adapted by the other provinces. This was most explicit in Ontario's

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direct adaptation of that format. Additionally, the second round of Prince Edward Island's process mandated a role for voters, and New Brunswick's Commission was composed entirely of electors rather than experts or public servants. Even in Quebec, where the original process was almost entirely government-driven, citizens were eventually invited to participate. From a variety of different processes, provinces eventually settled on a similar method, taking their cues from one that had achieved a great deal of popular support in another province.

Not only did the provinces converge around the use of citizen input, they also converged around the idea of a mixed member proportional system. Of the five provinces, only BC did not propose this system as the alternative to SMP.

These similarities are likely to influence any future electoral reform efforts. One need only look to Ontario's near-Xerox of British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly to predict how electoral reform initiatives will proceed down the road. PEI and Quebec even added participatory aspects mid-stream, although their processes were too far along to implement something as grand as a Citizens' Assembly. Ontario's use of the BC model, along with the nearly universal use of referenda with supermajority thresholds suggests that governments—whether federal or provincial—wanting to reopen the electoral reform question must do so by consulting electors to design a new system and by asking the population to approve any recommendations.

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Figure 1: Review of Provincial Reform Efforts in the Provinces, 2003-2009

	Process	Proposed System	Threshold for Implementation	Outcome
British Columbia	A Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, comprised of 180 randomly chosen members, including a male and a female representative from each riding and from the at-large Aboriginal community.	BC-STV, a variation on the single transferable vote. District magnitudes would vary between 2 and 7 members, depending on population density, and thresholds would be determined using a Droop Quota.	The first BC referendum on electoral reform was held on May 17, 2005. After its failure, a second referendum was held on May 12, 2009. Both referenda had two thresholds: support from 60% of voters and from a majority of voters in 60% of constituencies.	In 2005, 57.7% of voters supported STV, and majorities did so in 77 of 79 ridings, falling short of the first threshold. In 2009, 39.6% of voters supported STV, as did majorities in only 7 of 85 ridings, falling short of both thresholds.
Ontario	A Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform comprised of 103 randomly chosen members, including a representative from each riding.	A mixed member proportional system with separate votes for 90 local MLAs and for 39 from closed party lists. Party seats would be distributed proportionally among parties surpassing a 3% threshold using the Hare Quota.	A referendum on electoral reform in Ontario was held on October 10, 2007. This referendum had two thresholds: support from 60% of voters and from a majority of voters in 60% of constituencies.	Overall, only 36.9% of voters preferred MMP to SMP, as did majorities in only 5 of 107 constituencies, falling short of both thresholds.
Quebec	Université de Montréal political scientist Louis Massicotte was commissioned to design a new mixed electoral system for Quebec.	A mixed system using a single vote to distribute seats in 77 plurality "divisions" and in 50 proportional "districts" with two to three seats each. Rather than populating proportional seats from a list, MNAs are chosen from the parties' losing candidates.	Massicotte's recommendations were implemented as a government bill submitted to a Special Committee of the National Assembly. This committee included nine citizen members, and solicited opinions throughout the province. Despite such solicitation and the citizen membership, the process was similar to any other bill.	The Liberal government announced that it would be abandoning plans for reform in January 2008 because of gridlock on the Special Committee and failure of referenda in Ontario and British Columbia.

Figure 1: Review of Provincial Reform Efforts in the Provinces, 2003-2009 (continued)

	Process	Proposed System	Threshold for Implementation	Outcome
New Brunswick	A nine-citizen Commission on Legislative Reform, convened not only to create a new proportional representation system for New Brunswick, but also to develop broader legislative and democratic reform recommendations for the province.	A mixed member proportional system with separate votes for 36 local MLAs and 20 from closed party lists. Party seats would be distributed proportionally among parties surpassing a 5% threshold using the d'Hondt formula.	In June 2006, the Bernard Lord Progressive Conservative government announced that a referendum on electoral reform as suggested by the Commission on Legislative Reform would be held on May 12, 2008. The referendum would be subject to a double majority threshold.	Bernard Lord's government was defeated on December 13, 2006 by Shawn Graham's Liberals. In June 2007, Graham announced that his government would no longer be pursuing electoral reform.
Prince Edward Island	After a period of study and consultation, the single-member Commission on Electoral Reform recommended an MMP system. The seven-member Commission on Prince Edward Island's Electoral Future brought together members of each political party and an interested citizen from each federal riding to consult Islanders and refine this recommendation.	A mixed member proportional system with separate votes for 17 local MLAs and 10 MLAs selected from closed party lists. Party seats would be distributed proportionally among parties surpassing a 5% threshold using the d'Hondt formula.	A plebiscite on electoral reform was held on November 28, 2005. To be binding, the plebiscite had to surpass two thresholds: support from 60% of voters and from a majority of voters in 60% of constituencies.	Neither threshold was met. Overall, only 63.6% of voters supported a switch to MMP, with majority support in only 2 of 27 constituencies.

8. CONCLUSION

Efforts to implement electoral reform in Canada over the last decade have not been successful, with voters preferring the status quo to the proposed alternatives. When consulted in Ontario, in Prince Edward Island, and in British Columbia (the second time around), nearly 60% of voters rejected the new systems. These failures, along with the inability to agree on what a new system should look like, derailed reform in Quebec. In New Brunswick, a new government simply swept the previous government's work on electoral reform under the rug. Each of these efforts are summarized in Figure 1. The figure highlights a similar plotline in all five provinces: despite early enthusiasm, electoral reforms ground to a halt.

It is equally significant that nearly five years have passed since November 2004, when Ontario launched the country's most recent electoral reform initiative. Dating back to 2003, neither the federal government, nor Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Alberta have attempted electoral reform. So, while the failure of British Columbia's second referendum has been hailed as a sign that electoral reform has hit a dead end in Canada, the dearth of new initiatives may provide equally potent proof that the air has gone out of the electoral reform balloon.

Given this, provincial electoral reform advocates face an uphill battle in the years ahead. This does not mean that they should give up, but it does mean that the chances of success in the short-term are slim.

The combination of Canada's federal party system and the country's political geography exacerbate regional tensions that could be tempered by adopting some form of proportional representation at the national level. However, the recent failures at the provincial level combined with an almost pathological

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fear of democratic reform at the national level render a change of this sort highly unlikely. At least for now, electoral reform is off the agenda at both the provincial and federal level.

Despite this, electoral reform remains a critically important issue in Canada. The five reform efforts outlined in this report demonstrate this. They also highlight the importance of questioning the status quo and discussing alternatives. If our electoral systems in Canada were perfect, these reform efforts and the debate they created would not have occurred. Electoral reform may be down, but it is not out in Canada.

At the same time, the involvement of citizens in these reform efforts has set a precedent that will be difficult to ignore when the time comes to once again challenge the status quo—be it electoral reform, constitutional reform or some other contentious element of Canadian democracy. This in itself is a significant and positive change in favour of more citizen engagement. The reform efforts did not result in new systems, but there was change nonetheless. ■

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GLOSSARY

Closed List – A proportional representation party list with which electors cannot indicate any preferences for the ordering of a the parties’ candidates. Instead, they may only cast a vote for their preferred party. (see also *Proportional Representation, Open List*)

Compensatory Seats – Compensatory seats are those seats used in Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems to make parties’ seat shares match vote shares more closely. If a party’s share of seats is less than their share of the vote, then compensatory seats are awarded in order to boost seat shares to more proportional levels. (see also *Mixed Member Proportional System*)

District Magnitude – The number of seats to be filled within a single electoral district, constituency, or riding. (see also *Electoral District*)

Droop Quota – The Droop Quota is a common technique used to determine how many votes a candidate must receive to be elected in a Single Transferable Vote (STV) system. The Droop Quota is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Votes Necessary} = \frac{\text{Total Valid Votes} + 1}{\text{Seats to Fill} + 1}$$

Every candidate meeting this quota, either on first count or after subsequent vote transfers, will be awarded a seat. The Droop Quota calculates this quota in such a way that there will be no more elected candidates than there are seats to be filled in the district.

Electoral Boundary – Electoral boundaries are the borders used to indicate the geographic divisions between the different constituencies throughout a province.

Electoral District – An electoral district is a territorial unit through which candidates are elected and sit as members. Other equivalent terms include *riding* or *constituency*.

First-Past-the-Post System – see *Single Member Plurality System*

Hare Quota – The Hare Quota may be used in both STV and List PR systems to determine how many seats will be distributed to each competing political party. In both cases, the Hare Quota is calculated as:

$$\text{Hare Quota} = \frac{\text{Total Votes}}{\text{Total Seats}}$$

In STV systems, parties winning enough preferences to meet or exceed the calculated Hare Quota are awarded seats in the legislature. In List PR systems, each party’s valid vote total is divided by the Hare Quota and the resulting quotient determines how many seats each party will get. So, if a party in a List PR system has 36 votes and the Hair Quota is 5, the party will receive 7 seats in the legislature.

Highest Average Method – Highest Average Methods of seat distribution are iterative processes in which successive quotas are calculated for each seat awarded. In each iteration, the quotient, determined both by a party’s vote and seat attainment thus far, is recalculated for each competing party. The party with the highest calculated quotient is awarded a seat, and a new quotient is calculated using the party’s updated seat total. After this recalculation, again, the party with the highest quotient is given the next seat.

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This process continues until every seat has been distributed. (see also, *d'Hondt Formula*, *Saint-Laguë Method*)

d'Hondt Formula – This formula, referred to as the d'Hondt formula, is used to distribute seats in List PR electoral systems:

$$\text{Quotient} = \frac{\text{Party Vote Total}}{\text{Seats Awarded} + 1}$$

This formula is calculated for each of the parties individually, and the party with the highest quotient post calculation is awarded a seat. Once a party has been given a seat, their quotient is recalculated with their new seat total. This particular formula favours more successful parties over less successful ones, making it less proportional than other *Highest Average Methods*. (see also *Highest Average Method*, *Saint-Laguë Method*)

Largest Remainder Method – Largest Remainder Methods are used to distribute seats in List PR electoral systems. In this family of methods, a quota is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes by the number of Legislative seats to be distributed. Each party's share of the vote is then divided by this quota, and the resultant determines the number of seats that each party is awarded. A quotient of 5.4 awards a party with 5 seats in the legislature. If empty seats remain after this distribution, they are distributed to those parties with the largest remainders until the legislature has been filled.

List Proportional Representation – In a list proportional representation system, each political party submits a list of candidates to electors. These lists are a roster of who will fill the seats won by each of the parties. If a party's vote share earns it 25 seats in the legislature, it is the first 25 candidates on the list who will fill these seats. (see also *Closed List*, *Open List*)

Mixed Member Plurality System – A Mixed Member Plurality (MMP) system is one in which some portion of the seats are distributed using a plurality vote while the rest are distributed proportionally. The greater the share of seats accorded to the proportional distribution, the more proportional the overall distribution.

Open List – A PR party list in which electors have influence over the candidates' order. In open list systems, electors not only choose their preferred political party, but may also express preferences for candidates within the parties. (see also *Closed List*)

Overhang Seats – In mixed systems, it is possible for parties to win more seats in plurality contests than they should be allocated according to their share of the proportional vote. Overhang seats are these local constituency seats awarded to parties beyond their proportional share.

Panachage – Panachage is the name of the proportional representation system used in countries like Switzerland and Luxembourg. In this system, parties submit a list that includes enough candidates to fill every seat in a given constituency. Electors may then either cast their vote for the party's slate as is or choose preferred candidates individually. Seats are then distributed proportionally according to the parties' share of total preferences expressed. The candidates' positions on the party lists are determined by the level of support that they have among the electorate.

Plebiscite – like a referendum, a plebiscite is a tool of direct democracy in which the government determines the public's support for an policy by putting it to a direct vote. Unlike referenda, however, the results of a plebiscite are not legally binding.

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Proportional Representation – Proportional Representation (PR) systems are designed to distribute legislative seats to political parties based on their share of the vote. Ideally, a party's seat share will match its vote share in a PR system.

Saint-Laguë Method – The Saint-Laguë method is a Highest Average method for distributing party list seats. The formula used in the Saint-Laguë method is:

$$\text{Saint-Laguë quotient} = \frac{\text{Votes for Party}}{(2 \times \text{Party Seats Awarded}) + 1}$$

Because the weight of seats awarded is twice as large as with the d'Hondt method, it favours smaller parties, encouraging more proportional results. (see also **Highest Average Method, d'Hondt Formula**)

Single Member Plurality System – Single member plurality (SMP) systems are used in all of the Canadian provinces and at the federal level. In this system, the country is divided into single member territorial constituencies. The candidate winning the greatest share of the vote in each constituency is chosen to serve as that constituency's representative in the legislature.

Single Transferable Vote – The Single Transferable Vote (STV) system elects representatives from multi-member constituencies. On their ballot, electors rank candidates preferentially, and those candidates who receive enough preferences are elected to one of the multiple seats in the constituency. Once a candidate is elected, his or her "surplus" ballots are distributed among the other candidates, according to voters' successive preferences. Likewise, if no candidates have the votes necessary to surpass the threshold, the lowest ranking candidate is removed from consideration and his or her ballots are redistributed, again, according to the voters' other stated preferences. To some extent, this system provides proportional electoral results. (see also **Droop Quota, Hare Quota**)

Threshold – An electoral system's threshold refers to the share of the popular vote necessary for a party to win a seat in the legislature. (In the case of some MMP systems, the threshold for inclusion in proportional calculations may also be the winning of a plurality seat in addition to a numerical threshold.)

Weighted Gregory Inclusive Method – The Weighted Gregory Inclusive Method is a technique for the more proportional distribution of surplus votes in the SMP system. Rather than transferring secondary preferences for their full value or choosing which ballots to transfer at random, as done using other methods, the Weighted Gregory Inclusive Method involves the calculation of a transfer value for successive preferences. The transfer value of each vote is determined by this formula:

$$\text{Transfer Value} = \frac{\text{Surplus Votes Above Quota}}{\text{Votes Received}}$$

Thus, if the transfer value is 0.10, each of the subsequent preferences are transferred at one-tenth of their value; if Party B has received 100 second preference votes, they are transferred for a total value of 10 votes. If a preference is transferred more than once, the calculation of transfer value is compounded, so that every ballot is accorded the same overall weight. (see also **Single Transferable Vote System**)

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A dynamic and prosperous West in a strong Canada.

Our Mission

A leading source of strategic insight, conducting and communicating non-partisan economic and public policy research of importance to the four western provinces and all Canadians.

Canada West Foundation is a registered Canadian charitable organization incorporated under federal charter (#11882 8698 RR 0001).

In 1970, the One Prairie Province Conference was held in Lethbridge, Alberta. Sponsored by the University of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge Herald, the conference received considerable attention from concerned citizens and community leaders. The consensus at the time was that research on the West (including BC and the Canadian North) should be expanded by a new organization. To fill this need, Canada West Foundation was created under letters patent on December 31, 1970. Since that time, Canada West Foundation has established itself as one of Canada's premier research institutes. Non-partisan, accessible research and active citizen engagement are hallmarks of the Foundation's past, present and future endeavours. These efforts are rooted in the belief that a strong West makes for a strong Canada.

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