

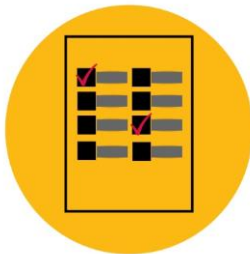
BC Electoral Reform Guide

This fall from October 22 to November 30, 2018 British Columbians will have the chance to vote on proposed changes to our electoral system through a mail-in ballot with two questions: should we switch from First Past the Post (FPTP) to a form of proportional representation (PR), and, if we choose to adopt a proportional system, which one should we adopt. Citizens will be able to vote on either question, or both. It will take the support of 50 per cent plus one to change the electoral system to a form of proportional representation. The government has indicated that if British Columbians choose to change the electoral system, another referendum will be held in a few years' time to decide whether we retain the new system.

Three different PR systems will appear on the ballot, two of which have never been put into practice before. Below is a summary of how each system would work. For a full detailed explanations please visit Elections BC:

<https://elections.bc.ca/referendum/voting-systems/voting-systems/>

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)



How it works: In some forms of MMP, voters have two separate votes: one for a district candidate and one for a party. In other forms, voters cast one vote for a candidate that also counts for the candidate's party. If MMP is adopted, a legislative committee will decide after the referendum if voters have one or two. Proportionality is achieved by the allocation of party votes, which decide who the regional representative is.

Advantages:

- The total number of seats a party gets is based on its share of the popular vote province-wide
- This system is used in other countries
- The candidate with the most votes in the district wins the district seat
- A party must get at least five percent of the vote to get any regional seats

Disadvantages:

- Ridings will become larger, meaning Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) will have less time for local engagement (estimates for Canada say ridings could be up to two times larger)
- More likely to result in minority governments, which could deadlock decision making and result in more frequent elections if parties are unable to come to agreements. Alternatively, some argue this could lead to more compromise between parties

Case Study: New Zealand adopted a MMP system in 1993 through a non-binding referendum. Since its adoption, only minority governments have been elected into the New Zealand Parliament and to gain confidence they have either had to negotiate supply agreements or form coalitions.



Rural-Urban Proportional

How it works: Rural Urban combines two different proportional voting systems: Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP).

Voters in urban and semi-urban districts use STV to elect multiple MLAs for their larger electoral district. STV districts are larger and have more than one MLA. Parties can run multiple candidates in a district and voters rank their preferred candidates on the ballot (first, second, third, etc.). Voters can rank as many candidates as they wish. In rural districts, voters use MMP (as explained above) to elect district and regional MLAs

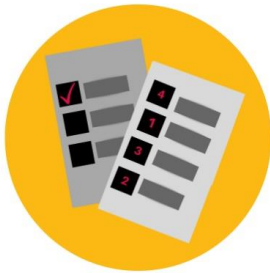
Advantages:

- Flexibility for rural and urban centres in BC
- Provincial results are likely to be generally proportional
- Parties do not choose the order of the list so voters have more control over electoral outcomes

Disadvantages:

- Ballots can be complex and take time to understand and complete
- Several rounds of counting are usually required
- Electoral districts would be larger than they are now and there would be fewer of them

Rural–urban proportional is the only proportional voting system proposed in BC's 2018 electoral reform referendum to include a voting system used in Canada before: Alberta and Manitoba have used multi-member STV in major cities to elect provincial members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) for 30 years. This approach produced proportional outcomes in the cities where STV was used, but not in rural areas, which used STV's non-proportional single-member equivalent - the alternative vote (AV) - in single-member ridings. BC had a referendum on STV in 2009 which was rejected. The results were 60.9% against, 39.1% for.



Dual Member Proportional

How it works: Two ridings are consolidated and voters choose two candidates to represent one larger riding. The first seat is awarded to the candidate on the list who receives the most votes, while the second is based on province-wide results to ensure proportionality. Large rural ridings will remain unchanged with only one representative.

Advantages:

- Allows third parties a chance to get seats in the legislature
- Achieves proportional representation based on popular vote
- Independent candidates win a seat if they place first or second in the district

Disadvantages:

- Complex and difficult to explain
- Newly designed system so not yet used in any other jurisdiction
- Parties decide the order of the party list, thus they have more control over who is elected
- The candidate in second place may not win the second seat, because second seats are allocated to parties to attain a proportional outcome

No jurisdiction appears to use DMP. In April 2016, the PEI Special Committee on Democratic Renewal officially recommended that DMP appear as one of five options on the 2016 PEI referendum. The referendum took place from October 29 to November 7, 2016. DMP was eliminated on the 3rd round, and after its votes were redistributed MMP was declared the winner ahead of FPTP.