July 8, 2025

Strengthening Our Voting System to Increase Representation, Reduce Polarization, and Empower Voters

Fair Voting BC (FVBC) is a registered BC non-profit society with extensive expertise in voting system analysis and design.[1] Our focus here is what system or approach might be optimal to pursue in BC in light of the various electoral reform processes that have informed public thinking over the past 20 years.

We recommend that BC adopt a "Regional Representation" model that combines the best features of previous proposals, while avoiding concerns most often raised about other options. Regional Representation represents a "consensus-building" approach that most electoral reform advocates would support (currently endorsed by Fair Voting BC, Springtide (our partner in a charter challenge to the constitutionality of our voting system), and Fair Vote Canada). FVBC would also endorse other voting options aligned with the values outlined in Section 2 below.

1. Problems We Aim to Solve

The root of the widely recognized problems caused by our current First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) voting system is the use of single-member districts, which means that only one MLA can be elected per riding and fewer than half the voters typically end up voting for the elected MLAs. The ineffectiveness of these voters and their votes leads to a number of significant problems:

1. **Regional Polarization:** The local plurality view is amplified and exaggerated, creating regional sweeps which exacerbate inter-regional tensions and encourage polarization.

2. **Limited Local Advocacy for Voters' Political Views:** Over half the voters do not have an MLA in their riding who advocates their political views and concerns in the legislature.

3. **Under-Representation of Minority Views:** Minority political views are systematically under-represented or suppressed, so these voters' interests and views are not appropriately reflected in legislation.

4. **Violation of the Majority Principle:** A party can often win majority power with significantly less than majority popular support, and there can be "wrong winners", where a party that wins the most votes has fewer seats than another party.

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[1] For more information on Fair Voting BC and the relationship between this submission and those of other organizations, please see Appendix 1.

5. **Policy Lurch:** Small vote swings can completely switch the party in power, which can produce significant policy swings, undo the work of the previous government, and produce an uncertain investment environment.

6. **Strategic Voting:** Voters are pressured to vote "strategically" (insincerely) – i.e., to vote to prevent someone being elected rather than voting for who they most support.

7. **Discrimination:** Fewer women, racialized minorities, and younger people are elected than their share of the population would warrant.

8. **Limited Political Competition:** FPTP makes it extremely difficult to start new parties, and voters cannot choose between different candidates from their preferred party.

9. **Limited Voter Influence:** Voters often have limited influence over election results. They cannot ensure a well-liked and responsive MLA in a swing riding is re-elected if a minor shift in the vote goes against the MLA, and they can't easily replace less responsive MLAs in safe ridings when they'd like to.

These problems are widely acknowledged, especially by politicians when they're not in power, but sometimes even when they are (Appendix 2).

2. Our Target – What Does a Healthy Democracy Look Like?

To strengthen our democracy, it's important to affirm what we want an improved voting system to look like. We propose seven key principles:

1. **Make Voters Equal:** To the greatest extent possible, each citizen's vote should have equal effect in electing an MLA who shares their point of view and the number of 'ineffective' votes should be minimized (votes that do not affect the make-up of the legislature).

2. **Empower Voters:** Each voter should be able to vote for a specific candidate, and should be able to choose between candidates of the same party; MLAs should principally be accountable to the voters who elect them.

3. **Ensure Majority Rule:** The system should not give a government majority power without the support of a majority of voters.

4. **Ensure Geographic Representation in Line with Regional Voter Preferences:** Each region of the province should be represented by MLAs who live in that region, and each region should elect MLAs reflecting the diversity of political views in the riding.

5. **Promote Sincere Voting:** Voters should not feel torn between voting against who they don't want to win and voting for who they do want to win.

6. **Promote Diversity:** MLAs as a whole should reflect the diversity of society (particularly within each region).

7. **Respect Minority Views:** Our voting system should better support and foster political pluralism and competition – voters with minority political views and emerging political parties should not be discriminated against, and independents should have a fair chance of being elected.

3. What We're *Not* Looking For:

To help build political consensus, we'd also like to clarify what we're seeking to avoid. It is clear that British Columbians do not want:

- **"Closed" Party Lists** – British Columbians have expressed opposition to voting systems where parties can place candidates in favoured positions on a list.
- **Many Small Parties** – Having too many small political parties can make it harder to form stable governing arrangements. The approach we recommend below avoids this issue.
- **Representation at a Distance** – British Columbians are likewise concerned about losing representation in the more sparsely populated areas of the province, and would likely oppose any approach in which top-up MLAs come from outside their own region.
- **A Significant Increase in the Number of MLAs** – Adding new MLAs to represent currently under-represented voters would be helpful, but the number of MLAs added should be modest enough in number to garner public support.

4. What Could Work? Regional Representation

Previous Options – STV and MMP: Two main options have previously been discussed for use in Canada: Single Transferable Vote (STV)[2] and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP).[3] STV uses **Multi-Member Districts (MMDs)** to represent neighbouring voters with differing political views (typically combining 2-7 current ridings); MMP uses single member districts (SMDs) together with compensatory "**top-up**" seats (typically about 40% of the total number of seats).

A More Flexible Approach Tailored for BC: Regional Representation:[4] During the federal Electoral Reform process in 2016, Fair Voting BC and Fair Vote Canada proposed a more flexible, hybrid **Regional Representation** approach[5] in which each region of the province (comprising between 10 and 17 seats) could be organized into small MMDs, each with 2-4 seats (potentially retaining the occasional single-member seat), and adding a small number of top-up seats per region (one for every 5-6 current seats) to compensate for any inequities that arise in the MMDs.[6]

Figures 1 to 3 below illustrate how this Regional Representation model might work with seven regions, 2 or 3-seat MMDs, and 18 top-up seats. In 2024, the NDP won 47 seats with 45% of the vote, the Conservatives 43 with 43%, and the Green Party 2 with 8%. With Regional Representation, almost every 2-member district and every 3-member district would elect MLAs from more than one party, and the overall mix of MLAs from each region would closely match each party's regional vote share, including for smaller parties. Including top-ups, the NDP might have won 52 seats, the Conservatives 50, the Green Party 7, and former BC United candidates 2.

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[2] Final Report of BC Citizens' Assembly, describing STV: citizensassembly.arts.ubc.ca/resources/final_report.pdf

[3] MMP Explainer: cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/mixed-member-proportional-explainer-1.4889743

[4] For more details on the design approach we used to develop this model, see Appendix 3

[5] Initially called Rural-Urban Proportional Representation. For more info, see fairvote.ca/19/08/2016/fvc-erre-submissions_appx_12_-rural-urban_pr

[6] Because more than one political perspective can be represented by the MLAs elected in the small MMDs, we need far fewer top-up seats than with MMP – about 15-20%, rather than 40%.
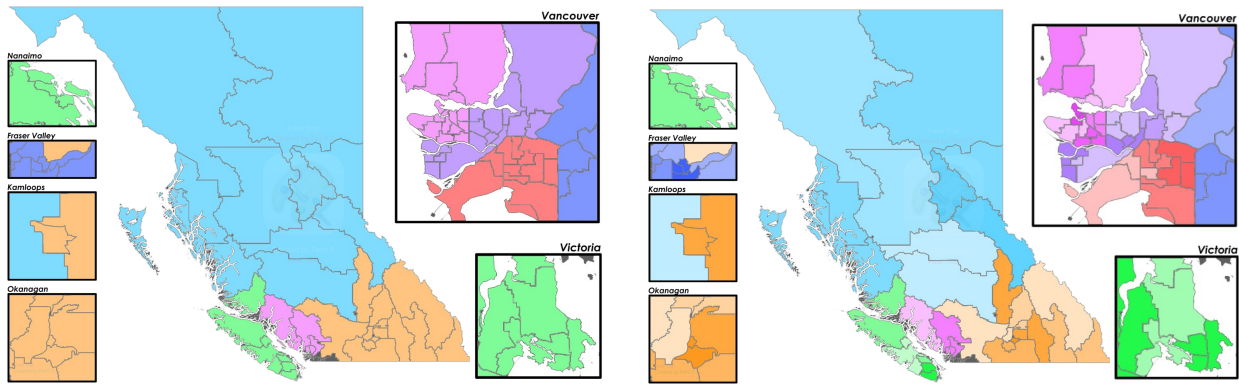
Figure 1. Illustration of (left) how the current ridings of BC might be arranged into seven regions (each colour-coded), each containing between 10 and 17 current ridings, and (right) how these regions might be further arranged into Multi-Member Districts (MMDs) (each colour-coded by varying shades of the regional colour). Note that an occasional Single Member District (SMD) might be used, if desired.
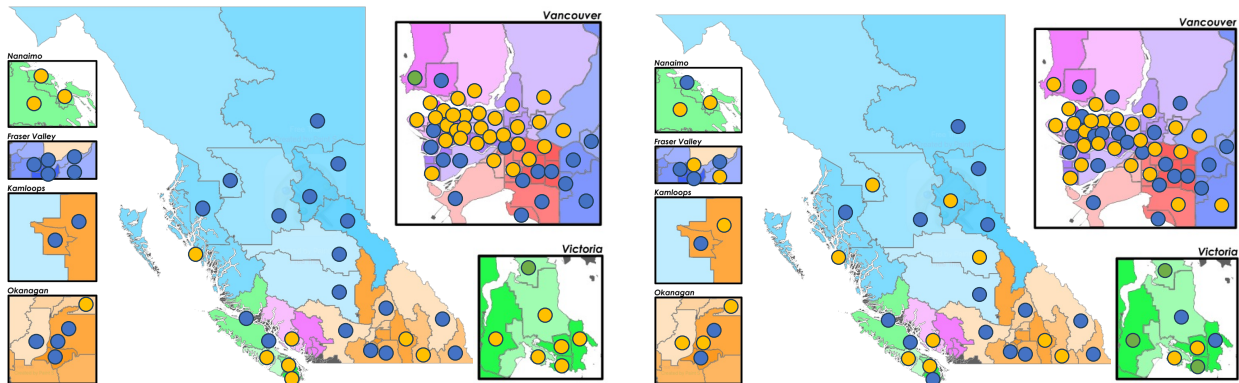

Figure 2. The MMDs of Figure 1 overlaid with: (left) the results of the 2024 election (party affiliations of elected MLAs indicated by coloured dots – NDP (orange), Conservatives (blue), and Greens (green)), and (right) the estimated results if the proposed MMDs were used. Note the substantial elimination of regional "sweeps" in the MMD results (eg, NDP MLAs elected throughout the interior regions and Fraser Valley, and Conservative MLAs elected throughout Vancouver Island and elsewhere in the Lower Mainland).
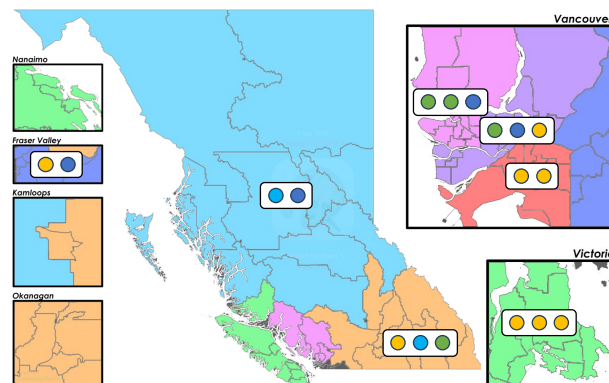

Figure 3. Representation of the top-up MLAs estimated to be elected in each of the seven regions shown in Figure 2 (right). Former BC United candidates are shown in teal. Regions were modeled with one top-up MLA for every 5-6 MLAs in each region. Overall, the top-ups balance out the regional results for the two largest parties and reduce the barriers to entry for smaller and emerging parties.

Ballot Design: With Regional Representation, the ballot could look virtually identical to our current ballot – voters would simply be asked to place an 'X' beside the name of their most preferred candidate (see Figure 4). The main difference on the ballot itself would be that the larger parties would likely run two or more candidates, which would give voters the ability to choose between candidates from the same party. This would encourage parties to put forward slates of candidates that more fully reflect the gender and other demographic diversity of each district.[7]

Current FPTP: Proposed Regional Representation:

Figure 4. Comparison of current ballot design used for First Past the Post (left) and a proposed design for a "Single-X" ballot for a two-seat MMD under Regional Representation (right).[8]

Vote Counting: Vote counting would require two steps: first, we would determine who wins the local MMD seats, then who wins the top-up seat(s).

Local Seats: For the local seats, we would first count the votes cast for each candidate. With Single-X ballots, we would group the votes cast by party and give the first seat to the leading candidate of the party with the most votes in the district. Subsequent seats would go in turn to the leading remaining candidate from the party with the most remaining votes (Appendix 4).

Top-Up Seats: To determine who wins the top-up seat(s) in a region, we would use the "Strongest Runner-Up" method - we first determine each party's "fair share" of seats in the region (total number of seats times each party's vote share), then subtract the number of seats each party won in the MMDs and then assign the top-up seats to the top-placing candidate(s) from the most under-represented parties who were not elected in the MMDs.

Historical Precedent: Features of this tailored-for-BC Regional Representation model are firmly rooted in practice both here and elsewhere. Canada has considerable historical experience with MMDs - BC only stopped using them after the 1986 election, when nearly half the seats (34 of 69) were in two-member electoral districts (Appendix 5). MMDs with ranked ballots (STV) were

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[7] It would also be possible to have voters use a ranked ballot, as is done with STV, which could let voters vote in a more nuanced way, but "single-X" voting as a first step has the advantage of familiarity, if that is preferred.

[8] Ballot design regulations: bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/66_2022

widely used in provincial and municipal elections across western Canada in the early 20th century until 1974.[9] Regional top-ups are standard practice in most Scandinavian countries.[10] And the Strongest Runner-Up method has historically been used for MMP elections in the state of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, [11] as well as in Scandinavia.

5. Comparing Options

How would Regional Representation compare with our current voting system and other options?[12] The table below summarizes our assessments (justifications in Appendix 6):

	FPTP	STV	MMP	MMP "Lite"	Regional Rep
Equality	Poor	Very Good	Good	Fair	Excellent
Empowerment	Poor	Excellent	Good-VG	Fair	Very Good
Majority Rule	Poor	Very Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Geographic Rep	Fair	Very Good	Good-VG	Good	Excellent
Honest Voting	Poor	Excellent	Good	Fair	Excellent
Diversity	Poor	Very Good	Good-VG	Fair	Very Good
Minority Views	Poor	Very Good	Excellent	Fair	Excellent

Overall, our current voting system (FPTP) does poorly on all key democratic principles, including on geographic representation (usually considered one of FPTP's strengths) because it does not represent multiple political views within each region. MMP Lite represents only a minor improvement over our current system.

STV and MMP both perform significantly better, but **Regional Representation** builds on the strengths of both, more effectively addresses all seven core democratic principles, and has the virtue of being extremely simple for voters to use.

Summary

In summary, we recommend that BC proceed to implement a Regional Representation model (or an alternative system that aligns well with the values outlined in Section 2 above) and we refer the Committee to the more detailed suggestions of process outlined in Springtide's submission, which we fully endorse.

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[9] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Calgary_municipal_elections

[10] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Swedish_general_ election; 39 of the 349 seats in the Rikstag are top-up seats – 1 or 2 in each of 29 multi-member electoral districts. The Regional Representation model is therefore very similar to this.

[11] electoral-reform.org.uk/how-do-elections-work-in-the-german-states/

[12] We consider STV and MMP, as well as an **"MMP Lite"** model in which a few compensatory seats are added (~20%), based on a suggestion by John Rustad (see Appendix 2). The **Alternative Vote**, or use of ranked ballots in single-member districts, has also sometimes been proposed. In almost all material respects, AV functions similarly to FPTP, so in our view is not worth treating separately and we do not recommend adopting it.

Appendices

Appendix 1.   About Fair Voting BC & Relationship to Other Submissions

Fair Voting BC (FVBC) is a registered BC non-profit society that is committed to the principle of the fundamental equality of all voters, as guaranteed by Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We seek to reform how elections are conducted at all levels of government within BC in order to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each voter has effective representation and experiences meaningful participation in our democratic process, both central rights guaranteed by Section 3 of the Charter. FVBC was founded in 1997, and was active in all three electoral reform referendums (2005, 2009, & 2018). We served as the official proponent in 2009 and participated in the Make Every Voter Count coalition that served as the official proponent in 2018. We have over 9000 supporters on our mailing list from across BC.

We are currently partnering with the Springtide Collective for Democracy, a registered charity based in Nova Scotia, on a legal challenge to the constitutionality of our current voting system. We are claiming in court that the fact that fewer than half the voters are able to contribute to electing an MP (at the federal level) violates our charter right to effective representation. This case is currently under consideration by the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Springtide is making a separate written submission outlining its argument for why now is the time to take concrete action to strengthen our democracy by upgrading and improving our voting system and proposing more detailed process-related steps to achieving change. We fully endorse Springtide's submission and will not reiterate their points here.

Additionally, we have had numerous interactions with other organizations such as the Vote 16 coalition (we are members of that coalition) and Apathy is Boring, and substantially support their submissions as well.

Appendix 2. Comments From Leading Politicians

Leading politicians from both the BC NDP and the BC Conservative Party have previously expressed recognition that our current voting system is not serving us well and needs to change:

- **Former Premier John Horgan:** After the 2013 election, Horgan said "The first-past-the-post system is not serving the people of B.C." and "[It]'s not serving the diversity of opinion in our communities"[13] After winning a minority government in 2017, Horgan went on to campaign in support of changing the voting system, saying "They said: you must be disappointed you didn't win a majority. And I thought, well, you'd think that, wouldn't you? But I have to work harder and better and smarter in a minority than I would have otherwise. The tyranny of the majority can be, well, we've got the numbers, we're going to do it. In a minority situation you can't just rely on the numbers. You have to rely on the power of your argument." So "I will be asking citizens to embrace proportional representation because I think it's a better way for the public to have confidence that when we elect someone they'll have a say in outcomes".[14]

- **John Rustad:** In his submission to the Citizens' Assembly in 2004[15], now-opposition leader Rustad said there was "no question that our current system needs to change." He expressed a desire to retain "geographic representation and local representation," and encouraged having "more political parties to run candidates", providing "more options for voters" and removing "the need to vote for "the lesser of two evils"". He also acknowledged that preferential voting would not address the concerns of minorities and therefore suggested "augmenting the system through additional seats for any party winning more than 15 percent of the vote".

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[13]   vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/vaughn-palmer-still-licking-their-wounds-bc-new-democrats-talk-up-proportional-representation

[14] vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/vaughn-palmer-horgan-learns-through-minority-how-to-softpedal-change

[15] citizensassembly.arts.ubc.ca/resources/princegeorge_presentations/Rustad.pdf

Appendix 3.   Design Approach

In developing the Regional Representation model described in this submission, we reflected on and sought to honour the findings from previous deliberative and public engagement processes related to electoral reform, both in BC and elsewhere in Canada and beyond.

There are three key "design decisions" involved in selecting a voting system: (1) district structure, (2) ballot design, and (3) vote counting rules.

3.1 Overview of Three Key Design Decisions

3.1.1 District Structure: By logical necessity, any electoral system that enables voters in a district with different political views to each have an MLA representing their views in the legislature (i.e., a *pluralistic* voting system) needs to have two or more MLAs responsible for each geographic area in the province. The form these overlapping geographic responsibilities takes on can be referred to as the **District Structure**. There are two main types of pluralistic districts used in all variations of proportional or inclusive voting systems around the world:

1. **Multi-Member Districts (MMDs)**, in which a group of representatives is elected to represent a particular geographic area; these can range in size from as small as two members (e.g., STV in Ireland typically uses MMDs returning 3 or 4 members) to several dozen (common in Scandinavian countries); and

2. **Top-Up Regions**, in which one or more representatives are elected on a compensatory basis to ensure a close overall correspondence between vote and seat shares; the top-up regions can contain a total number of representatives ranging from about 16 (Scotland) to over 100 (New Zealand).

3.1.2 Ballot Design: Once the district structure has been determined, an appropriate ballot design and associated vote counting rules should be chosen. The two main decisions with respect to ballot design are:

1. **Single or Separate Ballots:** Whether voters fill out a single ballot or separate ballots for the district and top-up levels (if the system has both district and top-up levels)

2. **How Ballots are Marked:** How the ballots are marked (typically either by marking an 'X' beside one or more candidates or ranking one or more candidates)[16]

3.1.3 Vote Counting Rules: See Appendix 4 for a more detailed discussion of our recommendations for vote counting under the Regional Representation model. In general, vote counting rules should be chosen to ensure that voters have approximately equal influence over who is elected and that a minimum of votes are 'wasted' (do not contribute to electing anyone).

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[16] In principle, one could also mark or rank parties, although we are not advocating systems that use party lists

3.2 Brief Review of District Structure and Ballot Designs for Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP):

The two most familiar alternative voting systems proposed for use in Canada are the **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**, which was recommended by the BC Citizens' Assembly and previously used at both the provincial and municipal levels in the four western provinces, and **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)**, which was recommended by the Law Commission of Canada and the Ontario Citizens' Assembly, and was the top-ranked option in the 2018 BC referendum.

STV relies exclusively on MMDs, and in the CA's recommended version would have ranged in size from 2 seats in the more spread-out parts of the province (about the size of our current federal ridings) to as many as 7 seats in the most urban parts. Voters would rank one or more candidates, with no restrictions on crossing party lines in making their choices.

MMP combines conventional single-member districts (about 60% of total seats) with a top-up compensatory tier (40% of seats). The most common ballot design suggested for Canada involves a two-part ballot in which voters cast both a local vote (same as our current system) and a regional vote (most proposals in Canada recommend that the second vote be for an individual candidate listed on a regional ballot, rather than having a top-up tier that covers the entire province, which we do not recommend).

Concerns about Previous Proposals with Respect to District Structure:

- **STV:** With systems that rely solely on MMDs, there is a trade-off between district size, "proportionality" (match between vote and seat share), and the threshold for minority and emerging parties to win representation. An MMD with two members will nearly always enable the two largest political parties to each win a seat, which helps break down the regional polarization we experience with our current system in which one party tends to win almost all seats in various regions of the province. In addition, the largest parties will generally be motivated (and could be required) to run two candidates, which will tend to result in more gender-balanced slates from these parties and provide more choice to voters. However, voters with a minority political perspective, constituting say 10-15% of the population, will typically find themselves unable to elect a candidate they prefer, so their votes would continue to be wasted unless the district size were increased substantially (say to about 6-7 seats). With three seats in a district, the typical outcome will generally be either two seats for the party with the largest local support and one for the next largest party, or occasionally one seat for each of three parties (e.g., if the third party in a district, say the BC Greens or BC United, were to win 25% or more of the vote locally, they would likely win the third seat).

- **MMP:** Since the first tier in MMP is simply a First-Past-the-Post system, we anticipate the same sorts of regional sweeps by one or the other of the two major parties as currently occurs with FPTP. Voters in a given region of the province with a non-plurality political view would therefore expect to win much or all of their representation through the top-up layer. To ensure good overall vote/seat share correspondence, approximately 40% of the seats would need to be allocated regionally. As with STV, the size of the region determines the overall proportionality and barriers to entry for minority and emerging parties. A region of approximately 15 seats (say 9 single member ridings and 6 top-up seats) would enable voters with a minority political view constituting above 5% of the vote to elect a candidate they prefer (presuming an "open list" system is used in which the top-up candidates elected are

selected directly by voters). The main concerns that have been expressed about using MMP in BC are:

- The top-up MLAs would technically be responsible for representing voters across the entire region, though practically top-up MLAs from the same party would likely divvy up responsibilities based on their own geographic locations.
- There can be a perception of difference in legitimacy or priority of the two types of MLAs, though this is less likely when top-up MLAs are elected using open lists.
- Adopting an MMP system would require significant changes to existing riding boundaries (unless we adopted a 50-50 model in which adjacent ridings were paired).
- The smaller number of single-member ridings with MMP (vs FPTP) would mean that not all current MLAs could run again unless some of them ran solely on the open list.
- Most of the candidates who run in the local ridings would also want to be shown on the open list; this ballot would therefore likely have to show several dozen names.

3.3 Recommended District Structure: Small Multi-Member Districts + Regional Top-Up:

Given these critiques, **we therefore propose that the best path forward for BC would be a tailored approach that combines the small Multi-Member Districts of STV with a small number of regional top-up seats**, similar to those of MMP. If the MMDs were an appropriate mix of primarily two- and three-member districts (and allowing for an occasional single-member districts in particularly remote parts of the province such as the current North Island riding), then we would be able to ensure appropriate representation of the major political perspectives at the district level in almost all regions of the province, and provide a reasonable opportunity for small and emerging parties (and independents) to earn a seat at the regional level (groupings of between about 10-17 current seats, chosen to respect key geographic distinctions in the province – e.g., Vancouver Island is a natural region of 15 seats).

We recommend approximately 1 top-up seat for every 5-6 existing seats. The top-up seats could be in addition to the existing seats or they could be integrated into the largest MMDs in the region.

We call this particular tailored-for-BC model that combines MMDs and regional top-ups a <u>Regional Representation</u> model.

3.4 Illustration of Different Approaches to District Structures in Hypothetical 10-MLA Region:

Figure 3.1 below illustrates how the district structures of the various systems discussed above might be applied to a hypothetical region that currently elects 10 MLAs under FPTP. We illustrate STV, MMP, and two variants of Regional Representation, as well as an "MMP Lite" model, with 20% top-up seats, based on John Rustad's comment from 2004 that he would be open to adding top-up seats (see Appendix 2).

Using voting results from Vancouver Island in the 2024 election, where the NDP, Conservatives, and Greens received 46%, 34%, and 20% of the vote, respectively, we illustrate estimated results using each of the different voting models. Under FPTP, we estimate that the NDP might win 8 of 10 seats in these circumstances, and the Conservatives and Greens one each.
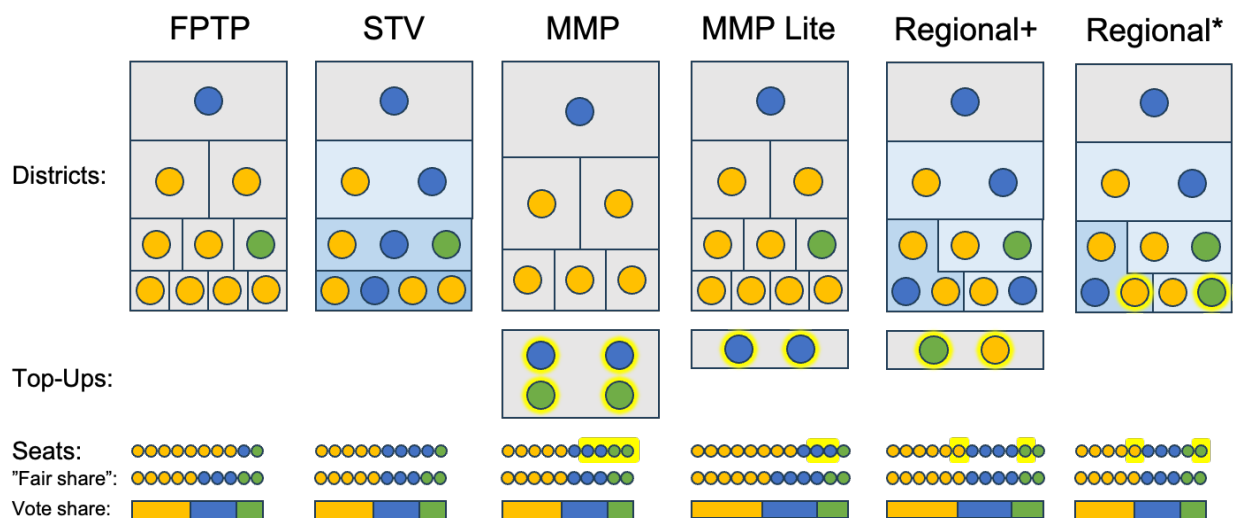

Figure 3.1. Illustration of the results produced by our current and several alternative voting systems in a hypothetical 10-seat region loosely modeled on Vancouver Island's 2024 results (vote shares shown in the "vote share" bars at the bottom of each column). Multimember districts are shown with blue backgrounds. Regional top-up seats are outlined in yellow (with Regional+, the top-up seats are in addition to the current seats; with Regional*, the top-up seats are integrated into the largest MMDs, if it is preferred to not increase the total number of MLAs). The "Seats" graphics show the number of seats won by each party for each model, while the "Fair share" graphics show how many seats each party would win if they optimally matched the vote share (rounded to the nearest whole seat).

The MMP Lite model produces a similar over-representation of the NDP at the riding level, though the Conservative Party ends up partially compensated through the two top-up seats.

All other models do quite well, though STV slightly under-represents the Green Party relative to their vote share. The Regional models match the "fair share" outcome perfectly, even with only 2- or 3-seat districts.

3.5 Ballot Design Considerations:

In the context of the Regional Representation model, we now consider what the most appropriate ballot design might be. There are two main options:

- **Single (One-Part) Ballot:** Within each multimember district, two candidates will likely run for each of the two larger parties and one for any smaller parties (or independents). There will therefore likely be approximately 5-10 names on the district ballots, depending on whether it is a 2- or 3-member district.
- **Two-Part Ballot:** Since there is a top-up layer in the Regional Representation model, we have two options for electing the top-up MLAs – we could either:
    1. Use the vote cast on the district-level ballot to determine the top-up winner(s), or
    2. Ask voters to explicitly cast a separate ballot to elect the top-up winner(s).

    In our view, the first option is preferable, as it retains the simplicity of our current ballot structure. If a separate ballot were to be used, and if voters were to be asked to indicate their preferred top-up candidate(s), then most or all of the candidates in the region would need to be named on this ballot, which could mean several dozen names. Overall, we support the first option, but suggest that the arm's-length panel proposed by Springtide make a recommendation on this.

We therefore recommend using a single ballot, as shown in Figure 2 in the main text.

There are two main options for how we might ask voters to mark this ballot:

- **Mark a Single 'X':** This is the same process used by our current voting system – voters would simply place an 'X' next to their most preferred candidate.
- **Rank the Candidates:** Alternatively, voters could be asked to rank one or more candidates (this is the approach used with STV).

This latter mechanism is most appropriate for use with larger district sizes in order to give voters more control over what happens to their vote as candidates with less support are progressively eliminated. However, since the outcomes of the MMD elections under a Single-X or ranked ballot are likely to be similar in small district sizes, **it would be reasonable to use the simpler "Mark an 'X'" approach** (though this could be revisited in future if we adopted larger district sizes, especially in more urban parts of the province). Again, the arm's-length panel recommended by Springtide could be asked to review and make a recommendation on this question.

For further discussion of our proposal and recommendations for the vote counting rules that could be used with Regional Representation, please see Appendix 4.

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Appendix 4. Counting Ballots for the Regional Representation Model

In the context of the proposed **Regional Representation** model (small 2-3 member districts grouped into regions of 10-17 seats with 2-3 top-up seats in each region (one for every 5-6 seats)), and assuming that we are using a single-part, "Mark an 'X'" ballot, we describe below how we would recommend counting the ballots.

There are two phases to the ballot count:

1. Counting Votes at the District Level: To count the ballots at the district level (typically 2-3 seats), we would first count all the ballots cast for each candidate. If two or more candidates are running for a given party, we would simply add their votes together to determine the total level of support for that party. The top-ranked candidate from the party with the most votes is elected to the first seat. For any remaining seats, we identify in sequence the next most under-represented party and elect the candidate from that party with the most votes (see Section 4A below for more details).

2. Determining Who is Elected as a Top-Up MLA: To determine who is elected as a Top-Up MLA, we first add up all the seats won at the district level for each party. As described in the section below, we would identify in sequence the most under-represented party and elect the candidate from that party with the most votes who is still unelected; this is referred to as the **"Strongest Runner-Up"** method.

Determining the Most Under-Represented Party or Independent Candidate

At various stages of the two phases of the counting process described above, we need to determine which party or independent candidate is currently the most under-represented. In principle, there are two main approaches to doing this: (1) **Largest Remainder** methods, and (2) **Largest Vote-to-Seat Ratio** methods. While there are some nuanced arguments regarding which of these approaches might be preferred in various circumstances, the differences between them are generally quite minimal, and the overall results using either of them will be similar. Overall, **we recommend using the Largest Remainder method**, as it is the easiest to explain, though we recommend delegating the choice of method to an arm's-length expert panel.

Largest Remainder Method: At the relevant level (district or regional), we apply the Largest Remainder method as follows:

1. Find the fraction of votes needed to guarantee winning a seat in the district or region (50% for 1 seat, 33.3% for 2, 25% for 3); this is known as the *quota*[17].
2. Within the district, determine how many quotas have been earned by each party or independent. For every full quota earned, one seat is awarded.
3. If any seats remain to be assigned, the party or independent with the largest remaining (fractional) quota(s) wins the remaining seat(s).

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[17] This value is technically known as the Droop quota, named after its inventor, Henry Droop. It extends the idea of a majority in a single-seat election (50%) to multi-winner elections.

Example: As an example, suppose two parties and an independent candidate are contesting a three-member district and Party 1's candidates have received 45% of the vote, Party 2's candidates 40%, and the independent 15%. The quota for a three-seat district is 25%, so the following table shows how we determine which three candidates are elected:

	Party 1	Party 2	Independent
Vote Share	45%	40%	15%
Initial Quotas (/25%)	**1.8** (45%/25%)	**1.6** (40%/25%)	0.6 (15%/25%)
Remainders	**0.8**	0.6	0.6
Final Seats	2	1	0

After counting the votes, we see that Parties 1 and 2 have both secured more than one quota's worth of votes (shown **bolded**), so these two parties each win one seat (which goes to the candidate from each party who secured the most votes). The remainders are shown in the third row. The final seat therefore goes to Party 1, which has the Largest Remainder of 0.8 quotas (**bolded**). The bottom row shows that Party 1 wins two of the seats, while Party 2 wins the third.

Largest Vote-to-Seat Ratio Methods: We will not explain this alternative approach in detail, other than to say that the basic idea is that seats are assigned in sequence to the party that, in each round, has the highest ratio of votes won by all candidates of a party to the number of seats assigned to the party at the current stage of the counting, plus one[18]; the goal is to ensure that all elected MLAs have received votes from approximately the same number of voters.

In the example above, the leading candidate from Party 1 wins the first seat (45% is greater than the vote shares won by the other parties). In the second round, Party 1's vote-to-seat ratio is reduced to 22.5% (45%/2), so the leading candidate from Party 2 wins the second seat with 40%. In the third round, the next-highest-ranked candidate from Party 1 wins the final seat because Party 1's ratio of 22.5% is greater than that of both Party 2 (40%/2 = 20%) and the independent candidate (still at 15%). The final outcome is therefore the same with the Vote-to-Seat method as with the Largest Remainder method (2 seats for Party 1 and 1 for Party 2).

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[18] In the voting literature, two main Largest Vote-to-Seat (V:S) share values are used - the d'Hondt value and the Sainte-Laguë value. In many cases, especially in smaller districts, the two values will produce the same outcomes, but d'Hondt is slightly biased towards larger parties, so many countries have instead opted to use Sainte-Laguë to be more equitable (including New Zealand, Germany, and some countries in Scandinavia). We recommend delegating the choice of approach to an arm's-length expert panel.

Appendix 5. History of Multi-Member Districts in BC

Table from elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf:

MULTI-MEMBER DISTRICTS[1]

Election	Members Per District						Total Districts	Total Members
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
1871	3	6	2	1	—	—	12	25
1875	3	6	2	1	—	—	12	25
1878	3	6	2	1	—	—	12	25
1882	5	5	2	1	—	—	13	25
1886	4	5	3	1	—	—	13	27
1890	8	6	3	1	—	—	18	33
1894	20	3	1	1	—	—	25	33
1898	24	3	—	2	—	—	29	38
1900	24	3	—	2	—	—	29	38
1903	31	1	—	1	1	—	34	42
1907	31	1	—	1	1	—	34	42
1909	31	1	—	1	1	—	34	42
1912	31	1	—	1	1	—	34	42
1916	37	—	—	1	—	1	39	47
1920	37	—	—	1	—	1	39	47
1924	38	—	—	1	—	1	40	48
1928	38	—	—	1	—	1	40	48
1933	34	3	1	1	—	—	39	47
1934[2]	35	3	1	1	—	—	40	48
1937	35	3	1	1	—	—	40	48
1941	36	3	2	—	—	—	41	48
1945	36	3	2	—	—	—	41	48
1949	36	3	2	—	—	—	41	48
1952	36	3	2	—	—	—	41	48
1953	36	3	2	—	—	—	41	48
1956	34	6	2	—	—	—	42	52
1960	34	6	2	—	—	—	42	52
1963	34	6	2	—	—	—	42	52
1966	41	7	—	—	—	—	48	55
1969	41	7	—	—	—	—	48	55
1972	41	7	—	—	—	—	48	55
1975	41	7	—	—	—	—	48	55
1979	43	7	—	—	—	—	50	57
1983	43	7	—	—	—	—	50	57
1986	35	17	—	—	—	—	52	69

[1] From 1894 to 1903 (but not including 1903 general election) a certain number of Electoral Districts were sub-divided into Ridings, each with its own Member. These have not been considered as multi-Member Districts.

[2] By-election. Seats and members altered by SBC 1934 c.15.

Appendix 6.   Justifications for Ratings of Potential Voting Systems:

In developing the ratings presented in Section 5 of our main submission, we assumed that the STV model would be similar to what the Citizens' Assembly recommended (MMDs averaging approximately 4-5 in size), the MMP model would be a regional model in which the regions average approximately 15 seats, with 9 single member districts and 6 top-up seats (60:40 mix), the MMP Lite model adds 20% MLAs, and the Regional Representation model uses 2-3 member districts in regions averaging ~15 seats, with approximately 15% top-up seats (~1 for every 5-6 current seats).

Equality: FPTP does worst on this measure, as typically more than half the voters do not end up with an MLA for whom they've voted. MMP Lite partially closes the gap. MMP more fully balances the outcome at a regional level, though half the voters would not be represented by an MLA at the district level, but only at the regional level. Regional Representation delivers comparable overall equality in the effect of one's vote to MMP, but with a higher proportion of MLAs elected directly at the district level (~85% with Regional Representation *vs* 60% with MMP).

Empowerment: FPTP again does worst on this measure as voters cannot choose between different candidates from the same party, and therefore cannot switch their vote to another candidate with similar political views if they are displeased with their current MLA. MMP Lite performs similarly to FPTP, but does slightly better as voters can potentially have some influence on the overall results if they switch their vote to another party. MMP does better than MMP Lite because voters have more influence on the overall seat outcome. STV does best on this measure because voters can specifically choose between more candidates from the same party. Regional Representation would perform similarly to STV, with additional influence over the overall seat outcome, if the MMD district sizes were similar; however, with district sizes of 2-3 (compared with an average of 4-5 with STV), voters might only be able to choose between two candidates for the larger parties.

Majority Rule: FPTP does worst on this measure because of the significant over-representation of the leading party, frequently delivering "false majorities" on as little as 35-40% of the vote. MMP Lite would help slightly here, and STV would do even better as the overall correspondence between vote share and seat share for the largest parties would be quite close. Both MMP and Regional Representation would deliver the best performance because they compensate at the regional level for discrepancies between vote and seat share.

Geographic Representation: FPTP only performs moderately on this measure, despite it often being claimed that geographic representation is its strength, because it only elects one MLA per riding and so does not reflect the range of political views held in each region of the province. This is exacerbated by its tendency to "sweep" all or almost all seats in a region, locking out voters with opposing political views. MMP Lite would only slightly mitigate these effects. MMP would also deliver similar sweeps in the single-member districts, but would elect opposing voices at a regional level. STV would do very well in electing MLAs with a range of political views within each local region, while Regional Representation would perform similarly (at least for the two or three main local political perspectives) and would better ensure that the overall diversity of voices in the region is accurately represented in the legislature.

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Honest Voting: FPTP is well-known for incentivizing "strategic" (insincere) voting, in which a voter feels significant pressure not to vote for their most-preferred candidate, but for someone they like less in hopes of defeating the candidate they like least and fear will be elected. MMP Lite only slightly reduces this dynamic. MMP preserves this dynamic in the single member seats, but can give voters a reason to vote sincerely for the top-up seats. Both STV and Regional Representation strongly encourages voters to vote sincerely.

Diversity: FPTP performs worst because parties can only run one candidate per riding, so they tend to be disproportionately drawn from the most privileged demographic groups (e.g., male, white, and older). MMP Lite only modestly changes this dynamic. MMP perpetuates this dynamic in the SMDs, but can provide some openness at the top-up level, though this tends to most affect the smaller parties in each region rather than the dominant party. Both STV and Regional Representation incentivize parties to run more than one candidate, but typically not more than 2-3, so there would be potential to increase diversity further if more seats were contested in the MMDs of the two systems, which is why we rank them both as 'very good' rather than 'excellent'.

Minority Views: FPTP again performs worst on this criterion because it typically significantly suppresses the seats won by all but the top two parties. MMP Lite would do only marginally better, as many of the top-up seats would likely be won by the second-place party rather than smaller parties. STV lowers the threshold for entry for new parties to about 15% if the average district magnitude is about 5 and an independent candidate can win a seat if they secure this same fraction of the vote in the district. MMP and Regional Representation do best on this criterion because the threshold for entry is reduced further to about 5% for a region with ~15 seats in it, and independents could compete for these seats if they are listed on a regional ballot under MMP or on ballots in different districts under Regional Representation.