

The
EASY-MIX ELECTORAL SYSTEM (EMMS or ‘M-S’)
 - a corrected view (EMMS-II), by James Proctor

SYNOPSIS: Each voter in each riding casts two ballots. The first ballot – part A, is cast for one B.C. political party of choice, and in the second ballot (part-B) a voter casts ballots for his or her most preferred riding candidate all the way down to his or her least preferred riding candidate.

SUMMARY: This is a corrected view. Mr. Proctor’s original view was presented at the May 31 Citizens’ Assembly hearing in Surrey. What came to light was a critical mistake in the view, namely, party leaders in particular did not have to win a riding seat in order to lead a party in the legislature. This electoral proposal is contrary to the spirit of the Westminster governance style, namely, executive members must also be elected members of the legislature. But the EMMS electoral model can be easily corrected on this point.

In the EMMS-II I will argue for the same kind of voting ballot as presented in the EMMS-I, with the exception representative House leaders of a given party must also win respective riding seats. At the same time, however, I will also argue any kind of STV *multi-member district* model is an unnecessary electoral feature. It’s an unnecessary electoral feature even though proponents rightly argue the multi-member district feature can provide a near to perfect proportional representation of political parties. The main point is we don’t need the aforementioned if it can be shown a simpler, easier electoral model exists – an electoral model adequately satisfying the greatest range of positive electoral values. All in all, it’s argued the EMMS-II can do all that the aforementioned can do in a multi-member district sense, but in simpler, easier terms viz. the EMMS-II.

OUTLINE: SYNOPSIS.
 SUMMARY.
 OUTLINE.
 BALLOT EXAMPLE.
 TWELVE KEY QUESTIONS.
 CONCLUSION.
 RECOMMENDATIONS.

The two official ballots for
DELTA NORTH
 for the
BRITISH COLUMBIA GENERAL ELECTION
 of May 5th, 2010

(A) The Official Political Party Ballot for the Province of British Columbia	(B) The Official Candidate Ballot for the DELTA NORTH MLA riding										
You have 1 party vote.	You have many candidate options to rank.										
<p>Completely fill in the square immediately to the left of the party you prefer the most.</p> <p>Your one vote helps decide which set of parties can have official representation in the House, and how much House privilege any one party, its leaders, and its associated MLA members can have while in the House.</p> <p>House privileges include greater financial support, better seating locations, more speaking time, etc.</p>	<p>You now vote for your most preferred riding candidate to your least preferred riding candidate.</p> <p>For example, completely fill in SQUARE NUMBER ONE next to your most preferred local candidate; then fill in SQUARE NUMBER TWO next to your second most preferred local candidate, and so on.</p> <p>All in all, vote or rank the candidates below, but vote for only one candidate per numbered column. Also, you can rank just one candidate; several; many, or all candidates. It's your choice.</p>										
Party name / Top three leader names.	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Name / Party</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9</td> </tr> </table>	Name / Party	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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* Respective party names and candidate names are presented in alphabetical order.											

TWELVE KEY QUESTIONS:

1. **HOW DOES THE EMMS-II RELATE TO THE WESTMINSTER STYLE OF GOVERNANCE?** All members of the House must win a riding election on Ballot-B. And for a given political party to have official representation in the House, the same must win at least 5% of the popular vote on Ballot-A. All in all, the benefits granted to any one political party via Ballot-A – financial benefits, seating benefits, speaking benefits, etc., correspond to the percentage of popular vote received in Ballot-A. This also means the party list electoral forms (open/closed) are not needed in any respect because its assumed official party members in the House will naturally organize their elected members with or without the use of list forms either open or closed.

2. **HOW DOES THE EMMS-II FACILITATE OPPOSITION PARTIES IN THE HOUSE?** The Ballot (A/B) guarantees the presence of House opposition parties (and members) on the basis a political party receives at least 5% of the popular vote (in Ballot-A), and on the basis party members (and leaders) are elected in Ballot-B.

3. **BALLOT-B IS A STV TYPE OF BALLOT. BUT BALLOT-B HAS A COMPLICATED COUNTING METHOD? HOW DO YOU SELL THAT TO THE PUBLIC?** Critics like to point out how complicated the STV is by singling out how complicated the counting method is. But the public could know just three simple things about the STV portion of the ballot and like it, and not need to actually know the complicated vote counting specifics:

A. Ballot-B itself is easy to follow.

B. The Ballot-B voting process is clearly explained and illustrated in a pre-election, mail-out Voter's Guide; and

C. The STV voting principle itself is easy to understand, that is...

If any one riding candidate gets less than $50\% + 1$ of the over-all riding vote in the NUMBER ONE ranking of candidates, then the other voting scores are counted until one candidate receives the threshold of at least $50\% + 1$ of the over-all riding vote. And like the simple FPTP system, the first riding candidate to receive at least $50\% + 1$ of the over-all riding vote – wins!

4. **HOW DOES THE EMMS-II RELATE TO THE MIXED-MEMBER PLURALITY MODEL?** In a MMP like the one used in New Zealand, a two ballot system is used. In Ballot-B candidates are elected using a simple FPTP counting format, just as each voter per riding casts one vote (in Ballot-B). In the EMMS-II Ballot-B a given candidate must also win by a simple FPTP number (of $50\% + 1$), but since a STV voting formula is used (in Ballot-B in the EMMS-II), there are also less wasted votes. How is this the case? It's the situation several riding candidates run in a single riding, and by example candidate-A may get 40% of the vote, candidate-B may get 30% of the vote, and candidate-C may get 20% of the vote. In this instance, it's clear at least 50% of the riding votes are wasted to candidates other than the lead

candidate – candidate-A, who has an initial 40% of the vote. Again, the STV rule in particular is if no one receives at least 50% +1 of the vote in the first ranking of preferential scores, then the other preferential scores are counted until at least one candidate receives at least 50% + 1 of the over-all vote scores.

Also, in New Zealand's MMP Ballot-A (re. the party vote) voter's decide which political party is to be most-to-least represented in the Parliament. It's the situation the percentage (or share) of party votes won (in Ballot-A) is the percentage (or share) of House seats won (in Ballot-A). This means the respective parties fill up their House seats won with either a fixed list of candidates they nominated before the general election, or with someone who is a *dual candidate*, that is, someone who stands for both an electoral seat (Ballot-B) and who is placed on a party list (Ballot-A). Likewise, in the EMMS-II a given political party through Ballot-A must also acquire a minimum of 5% threshold of the popular vote in order to have some kind of official standing in the House – but that's where the similarities end.

First, in the EMMS-II there's no possible election of House candidates who are merely party-nominated before the general election, rather, all House representatives (in the EMMS-II) must first win a respective riding seat. Second, in the EMMS-II the percentage (or share) of party votes won (in Ballot-A) does not transfer into the percentage (or number) of party seats won in the House. Rather, an exact percentage transfer *is made* in respect of certain other benefits, that is, in finance, in seating, in speaking, etc. ***But why not include a percentage of party seats benefit based on the popular vote a party receives in Ballot-A?*** Because you can't necessarily emphasize a strict correspondence in party seats in the House where and when the facilitation of independent candidates is also emphasized riding by riding (while using the STV).

5. **WHY EMPHASIZE THE STV WITH A SINGLE DISTRICT MAGNITUDE?** It's stated in the Citizens' Assembly reference literature the STV produces a close match between a party's seat share and its vote share – but this match actually declines with a decline in district magnitude – see C.A. fact sheet number 6. In Ballot-B (in the EMES-II), moreover, the district magnitude for each B.C. riding remains at '1', and therefore facilitates individual candidate preferences (see fact sheet #7). All in all this means the party-proportional element in the House is correspondingly mitigated to the same degree independent candidates are elected on a riding by riding basis. ***But why not just go with a STV with a multi-member district, and thus increase respective party-seat proportionality in the House?*** There are several reasons.

First, the use of a single-district STV maintains local riding representation as we know it. Second, even if a multi-member district STV is employed, and even if individually elected candidates per district are re-assigned to represent a given, local area after the fact, why go through all the trouble of re-arranging the districts if still keeping local representation in the first instance? And third, even if a multi-member district STV is employed; even if elected candidates are assigned local jurisdictions after the fact, and even if a greater sense of proportionality exists between House seats and party seats, it's still argued the EMES-II could more or less do all that the multi-member district STV would do but the EMES-II in particular would have three special advantages. The first special advantage of the EMES-II is strong party representation in the House is still possible (and earned) where and when voters give good

support to a party riding by riding; the second special advantage of the EMES-II is it doesn't require a change of the voting districts, and the third special advantage of the EMES-II is local riding representation (and accountability) is maintained as it is traditionally known and appreciated.

6. IF THE MULTI-MEMBER STV CAN MORE OR LESS DO ALL THAT THE EMES-II CAN DO, THEN WHY NOT GO WITH A ONE BALLOT MULTI-MEMBER STV? ISN'T IT THE SIMPLER AND EASIER ELECTORAL METHOD OVER-ALL?

Granted, it's simpler and easier by the fact ONE BALLOT may be used, but it's not simpler on two other more important counts. First, to move to a multi-member district STV we have to change electoral ridings, and second, to move to the same we've confounded the manner in which local riding representation is to take place. But in the EMES-II, we don't have to change electoral ridings, and we can maintain a strong, traditional emphasis on local riding representation still using an element of the FPTP, and the only real change is in the admittance of a simple-to-follow two-ballot voting ticket.

7. AREN'T YOU OVER-EMPHASIZING THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES IN THE HOUSE?

It's argued both the multi-member district STV and the EMES-II must speak to the place and role of independent party candidates. That said, the EMES-II itself incorporates per Ballot-B *a deliberate, measured emphasis* on the election of independent candidates for two reasons. First, it balances the role of party politic via (Ballot-A) with riding politic (Ballot-B), and second, it mitigates the problem of last-minute vote-stacking in local party associations. For where and when a local party association stacks the vote and affectively pushes out any and all other leading candidate (or candidates), the same leading candidate(s) knowingly retain the option of running as an independent candidate. Moreover, a local party association is arguably entitled to place just one representative candidate on the Ballot-B portion of the riding ticket, or may place more than one – say up to three. All in all, the use of a single-district Ballot-B with the party options described will also facilitate the place and role of minority candidates.

8. IS IT POSSIBLE TO OVER-EMPHASIZE THE PLACE AND ROLE OF INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES IN THE HOUSE? WHAT IF 50% OF THE HOUSE MLA'S ARE INDEPENDENTS?

It's proposed independents to run using the Ballot-B place both their name and the governance philosophy held, e.g., conservative, libertarian, Muslim, Christian, family, environmentalist, etc. This would help both riding voters decide which riding candidate to vote for, and help to speed up possible consensus-coalition politic in the House between the different MLA's. Otherwise, suppose 50% of the House MLA's were independents, and there was no certain coalition effort in the works between them. In this scenario, the House party leaders still have a very important role to play viz. organize the House to do the business of the people. Notes: the increased place and role of independents in the House would decrease the occurrence of party discipline in the House, and independents may put the word 'undeclared' next to their name in Ballot-B.

9. **WHAT IF A MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN BALLOT-A VOTE FOR A GIVEN POLITICAL PARTY, BUT THERE ARE NIL TO FEW SAME PARTY CANDIDATES IN THE HOUSE (PER BALLOT-B)?** If only one or a few party candidates are elected to the House, then the same may still take a House leadership role (or partner with another leadership group), and still acquire the benefits stated – financial benefits; seating benefits; speaking benefits, etc. Notwithstanding, the same to lead must still acquire a simple majority of votes in order for respective policy to pass. On the other hand, if no party candidate(s) get represented to the House, then the mantle of party leadership arguably falls to the party with the next highest percentage of the popular vote.

10. **HOW DOES THE EMES-II HANDLE THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSIVE, MINORITY GOVERNMENTS IN THE HOUSE?** If the leadership of the House – whether by few or by many, cannot pass a key piece of legislation – say a budget bill, then a committee of the whole is struck over the same key piece of legislation. In this instance, attending are the leaders of each political party, and the leaders of each philosophical view (among the independents). The committee goal is to provide an interim bill on the key piece of legislation – until the next general election. Importantly, the interim bill in reference is a watered-down bill carrying nominal, non-exceptional features. The new bill, then, if formulated by the committee of the whole (by a 50% +1 margin), is put the House in a free, secret vote. A 50% + 1 House majority vote is required for a pass. Otherwise, if the committee of the whole cannot come up with a nominal House bill, or if the bill cannot pass in the House, then a new election would be called.

11. **WHAT ARE THE OVER-ALL BENEFITS OF THE EMES-II?**

- A. It facilitates an active, balanced role between party reps and riding reps in the House.
- B. The EMES-II does not over-complicate the amount of change to be applied in the new voting system, and at the same time adequately satisfies most or all of the electoral values held by the B.C. electorate.
- C. Each electoral riding maintains a distinct, accountable representative.
- D. The role of minority candidate representation is enhanced.
- E. The problem of stacking the vote in local riding associations is mitigated.
- F. The two-vote ballot ticket is easy-to-follow.
- G. Different language Voter's Guides are issued prior to a given election date to help registered voters (a) choose a preferred party and a most preferred candidate; (b) understand the two-vote ballot ticket, and (c) know where and how to vote come election day.
- H. Party discipline is mitigated in the House.
- I. The problem of successive, minority governments is mitigated with an interim-policy, fall-back procedure; and
- J. Consensus and coalition politic is facilitated in the House.

12. **And, WHAT ARE THE OVER-ALL STRENGTHS OF THE EMES ELECTORAL APPROACH?** The main, over-all strength of the EMES approach is it satisfies the greatest range of positive electoral values using the most simplest, easiest mix of electoral options – with one exception. This exception represents the fact the B.C. voting public still holds to a number of favorable electoral values lying outside of the Citizens’ Assembly mandate, for example...

- A. A separate at-large election of the premier as a governor.
- B. The establishment of a fixed electoral time frame – 3 – 5 – 7 – 9 year options.
- C. Re-defined recall terms for any and all political party representatives.
- D. The election of our key regional representatives like the TransLink Chair through an at-large voting process (in the GVRD).
- E. More policy powers to the municipal-regions; etc.

CONCLUSION: So, after all that’s been said and done, how do we truly know what the best electoral model is when at the same time there are so many different electoral models to choose from? This is how we know. The principle is, we go with the simplest, easiest electoral model that’s still able to satisfy the greatest range of different electoral values different British Columbians hold to – and the EMES electoral model arguably does just that.

SUGGESTED VOTER RECOMMENDATIONS:

We recommend British Columbians accept a change to how B.C. MLA’s are elected to the B.C. legislature. In short, we recommend the following:

1. We recommend an easy-mix electoral system called EMES or ‘MS’. This means the voters in each riding cast two ballots. A voter on the first ballot casts one vote for a preferred provincial party, and the same voter on a second ballot casts a series of votes ranking a series of candidates with a view to elect one local riding candidate.
2. We recommend each registered voter per riding receive a Voter’s Guide to help them in their selection of a preferred political party; in their selection of preferred riding candidates, and with information about the new voting system (and where and how to vote); and
3. We recommend a second round of Citizens’ Assembly talks given both the successful implementation of the first round of electoral-reform recommendations, and the fact a number of significant voter-electoral values remain un-addressed involving both the provincial and local governance levels.

Cheers,

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