

Submission by Sylvia Korican

Since my oral presentation to your group here in Victoria on June 10th, I have realized that in order for you to thoroughly understand my proposal you would need further clarification and specific examples which I herewith will supply.

To Recap:

The last two elections in BC (wherein as in 1996 one party won the election with 39 seats and 39% of the votes cast and another party won only 33 seats but took 41% of the votes and as in 2001 when one party took 77 out of a possible 79 seats with 57% of the votes, another party with 21% of the votes only won two seats, and another party with 12% of the votes didn't gain one seat) got me started thinking of ways to redress these imbalances and develop my solution.

In answer to an article in the Times-Colonist of January 5, 2002, I sent my solution to the newspaper. I sent copies to Murray Coell, my MLA, Ron Cheffins, a political analyst, and Martyn Browne, a senior bureaucrat. (Murray Coell acknowledged receipt of his copy.) In April, 2003 I attended a meeting at the Fraser Institute when Gordon Gibson spoke of the possible need for democratic reform of our voting system. I gave him a copy of my solution which he passed on to the staff. I received an email reply stating that Roy Jenkins, UK parliamentarian, had put forward a similar proposition to Tony Blair. So you can see I am extremely interested in your work and do hope that my submission will help you in your deliberations.

So herewith my submission:

After much thought with reference to the present system as it stands I came to these conclusions:

A. That having geographically arranged seats to represent a particular area with an effort to balance the population within each area was worth keeping. It is extremely important that the residents of a particular area feel that their MLA is their voice in the House.

B. That giving each eligible voter one vote to elect their representative so that the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of his percentage of the votes cast, is a fair result, just as the party winning the most seats wins, regardless of its percentage of the popular vote.

C. That the problem with a proportional system is that voters aren't necessarily going to make logical second choices, while others will give their second choices to their first choice (called plumping). Any such system that denies counting all voters' second choices could be construed to be denying the voter his rights.

D. However, when the total votes are counted and the government selected, there should be some way to compensate the opposing parties for their percentage of the votes they garnered and this is where my solution (The Korican Solution), a mixed approach, lies, as follows:

There is nothing inherently sacred about the number of seats. In 1903 there were 42, in 1945 there were 48, growing to 79 seats in 2001, roughly representing the growth in our population. Hence it would be reasonable to add a number of seats, in my estimation 10% of the number of ridings, to be allocated to the opposing parties in proportion to their percentage of the total vote. These seats would be classified as Members at Large (M at L), not representing a riding but representing a party.

With reference to the 1996 election: there were 75 ridings/seats, another 10% would add eight possible seats for Members at Large, for a total of 83 possible seats in the House.

Here is what the math looks like:

1996	83 possible seats (75 plus 8)		
Party A	39	39.45%	
Balance	44	60.55%	$60.55/44 = 1.38\%$
Party B	33	41.82%	$41.82/1.38 = 30 - 33 \text{ won} = -3^*$
New Balance	11	18.73%	$18.73/11 = 1.70$
Party C	2	9.27%	$9.27/1.70 = 5 - 2 \text{ won} = \text{plus } 3 \text{ M at L}^{**}$
Party D	1	5.74%	$5.74/1.70 = 3 - 1 \text{ won} = \text{plus } 2 \text{ M at L}$
Party E	0	1.99%	$1.99/1.7 = 1 - 0 \text{ won} = \text{plus } 1 \text{ M at L}^{***}$

New Result: Government 39, Opposition 42 (33, 5, 3, 1)****

Notes: * When Party B takes more seats than its percentage would accord it, Party B is taken out of the calculation, making a new balance necessary. I originally pro-rated the figures in these cases but found this method more satisfactory arithmetically. It increases the percentage (from 1.38 to 1.70 in this case) which then decreases the number of Members at Large to be equal or less than the number permitted.

** Party C qualifies for five seats, three being Members at Large. Note that only whole numbers can be used when assessing number of Members at Large, as each whole number equates to one person.

*** Party E didn't win one riding, but qualifies for one Member at Large. Not all parties are guaranteed a seat as this is determined by the percentage of the total votes won. Very minor parties will still be without representation.

**** This result would have forced the government into a minority position, but it may have survived with support from Parties C, D, and/or E, but it reflects the fact that it had a smaller percentage of the votes than Party B. Also note that not all possible Member at Large seats were filled, as only six out of the possible eight were used.

Using the same process regarding the 2001 election:

2001	87 possible seats (79 plus 8)		
Party A	77	57.59%	
Balance	10	42.41%	divided by 10 = 4.24%
Party B	2	21.56%	divided by 4.24 = 5 - 2 won = plus 3 M at L
Party C	0	12.4%	divided by 4.24 = 2 - 0 won = plus 2 M at L

L

New Results: Government 77, Opposition 7 and a party that didn't win a riding still wins a seat in the House due to its percentage of the votes cast.

In the same way I have refigured all the elections going back to 1903, using the statistics of the BC Elections website (www.elections.bc.ca):

1903	46 possible seats (42 plus 4)
Party A	22 46.43%
Balance	24 53.57% divided by 24 = 2.23%
Party B	17 37.78% divided by 2.23 = 16 - 17 = -1 = no change
New Balance	7 15.79% divided by 7 = 2.25%
Party C	2 7.96% divided by 2.25 = 3 - 2 won = plus 1 M at L
Party D	1 7.36% divided by 2.25 = 3 - 1 won = plus 2 M at L

New Results: Government 22, Opposition 23 (17, 3, 3), government becomes a minority.

1907	46 possible seats (42 plus 4)
Party A	26 48.70%
Balance	20 51.30% divided by 20 = 2.565%
Party B	13 37.15% divided by 2.565 = 14 - 13 = plus 1 M at L
Party C	3 8.87% divided by 2.565 = 3 - 3 = 0 M at L
Party D	0 3.95% divided by 2.565 = 1 - 0 = plus 1 M at L

New Results: Government 26, Opposition 18 (14, 3, 1)

1909	46 possible seats (42 plus 4)
Party A	38 52.33%
Balance	8 47.67% divided by 8 = 5.96%
Party B	2 33.21% divided by 5.96% = 5 less 2 won = plus 3 MatL
Party C	2 11.50% divided by 5.96% = 1 less 2 won = 0 M at L

New Result: Government 38, Opposition 7 (5 plus 2)

Note: Party C won two seats but would have only qualified for one, but no party can lose a seat (riding) that it won.

1912	46 possible seats (42 plus 4)
Party A	39 59.65%
Balance	7 40.35% divided by 7 = 5.76%
Party B	0 25.37% divided by 5.76 = 4 - 0 = plus 4 M at L
Party C	1 11.08% divided by 5.76 = 1 - 1 = 0 M at L
Party D	1 1.37% divided by 5.76 = 0 - 1 = 0 M at L
Party E	1 0.74% divided by 5.76 = 0 - 1 = 0 M at L

New Result: Government 39 Opposition 7 (4, 1, 1, 1)

Note: The main opposition never won a riding but qualified for 4 Members at Large.

1916	52 possible seats (47 plus 5)
Party A	36 50%
Balance	16 50% divided by 16 = 3.125%
Party B	9 40.52% divided by 3.125% = 12 less 9 won = + 3
MatL	
Party C	1 2.74% divided by 3.125 = 0 M at L
Party D	1 0.74% divided by 3.125 = 0 M at L

New Result: Government 36 Opposition 14 (12, 1, 1)

1920	52 possible seats (47 plus 5)
Party A	25 37.89%
Balance	27 62.11% divided by 27 = 2.3%
Party B	15 31.20% divided by 2.3 = 13 less 15 won = -2 = no chg
New Balance	12 30.91 % divided by 12 = 2.58%
Party C	3 10.37% divided by 2.58 = 4 less 3 won = plus 1
MatL	
Party D	3 9.10% divided by 2.58 = 3 less 3 won = 0 M at L
Party E	1 0.38% divided by 2.58 = 3 - 1 = 0 M at L
Party F	0 3.50% divided by 2.58 = 1 - 0 = plus 1 M at L
Party G	0 3.50% divided by 2.58 = 1 - 0 = plus 1 M at L

New Results: Government 25, Opposition 25 possibly a minority government, but as the government only won 37.89% this is an expected result.

Note: Party B won 15 ridings, two more than they would have qualified for so were taken out of the equation. Without doing this the results would have had to be pro-rated, so that they results would be within the number of Members at Large allowed.

1924	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	23 31.34%
Balance	30 68.66% divided by 30 = 2.29%
Party B	17 29.45% divided by 2.29 = 12 - 17 = -5 = no change
New Balance	13 39.21% divided by 13 = 3.02
Party C	3 24.16% divided by 3.02 = 8 - 3 = plus 5 M at L
Party D	3 11.3% divided by 3.02 = 3 - 3 = 0 M at L
Party E	2 1.03% divided by 3.02 = 0 - 2 = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 23, Opposition 30, a minority government both before and after adding Members at Large.

1928	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	35 53.30%
Balance	18 46.70% divided by 18 = 2.59%
Party B	12 40.04% divided by 2.59 = 15 less 12 won = plus 3
M at L	
Party C	1 4.95% divided by 2.59 = 1 - 1 = 0 M at L

New Results Government 35, opposition 16 (15, 1)

1933	52 possible seats (47 plus 5)
Party A	34 41.74%
Balance	18 58.26% divided by 18 = 3.24%
Party B	7 31.53% divided by 3.24 = 9 - 7 won = plus 2 M at L
Party C	2 10.19% divided by 3.24 = 3 - 2 won = plus 1 M at L
Party D	2 7.74% divided by 3.24 = 2 - 2 won = 0 M at L
Party E	1 4.05% divided by 3.24 = 1 - 1 won = 0 M at L
Party F	1 0.62% divided by 3.24 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 34, Opposition 16

1937	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	31 37.34%
Balance	22 62.66% divided by 22 = 2.85%
Party B	8 28.60% divided by 2.85 = 10 - 8 won = plus 2 M at L
Party C	7 28.57% divided by 2.85 = 10 - 7 won = plus 3 M at L
Party D	1 1.76% divided by 2.85 = 0 M at L
Party E	1 0.43% divided by 2.85 = 0 M at L

New Result: Government 31, Opposition 22 (10, 10, 1, 1)

1941	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	21 32.94%
Balance	32 67.06% divided by 32 = 2.10%
Party B	14 33.36% divided by 2.10 = 15 - 14 won = plus 1 M at L
Party C	12 30.91% divided by 2.10 = 14 - 12 won = plus 2 M at L
Party D	1 1.57% divided by 2.10 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 21, Opposition 30 (15, 14, 1). Minority government formed a coalition with Party C.

1945	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	37 55.83%
Balance	16 44.17% divided by 16 = 2.76%
Party B	10 37.62% divided by 2.76 = 13 - 10 won = plus 3 M at L
Party C	0 3.52% divided by 2.76 = 1 - 0 won = plus 1 M at L
Party D	1 0.28% divided by 2.76 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 37, Opposition 15 (13, 1, 1)

1949	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)
Party A	39 61.35%
Balance	14 38.65% divided by 14 = 2.76%
Party B	7 35.10% divided by 2.76 = 12 - 7 won = 5 M at L

Party C	1	0.74% divided by 2.76 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L
Party D	1	0.21% divided by 2.76 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 39, Opposition 14 (12, 1, 1)

1952	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)	
Party A	19	30.18%
Balance	34	69.82% divided by 34 = 2.05%
Party B	18	34.30% divided by 2.05 = 16 - 18 won = -2 = no chge
New Balance	16	35.52% divided by 16 = 2.22%
Party C	6	25.26% divided by 2.22 = 11 - 6 won = plus 5 M at L
Party D	4	9.66% divided by 2.22 = 4 - 4 won = 0 M at L
Party E	1	0.26% divided by 2.22 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 19, Opposition 34 (18, 11, 4, 1). Minority government before and after, another coalition.

1953	53 possible seats (48 plus 5)	
Party A	28	45.54%
Balance	25	54.46% divided by 25 = 2.18%
Party B	14	29.48% divided by 2.18 = 13 - 14 = -1 = no change
New Balance	11	24.98% divided by 11 = 2.27%
Party C	4	23.36 % divided by 2.27 = 10 - 4 won = plus 6 M at L
Party D	1	1.11% divided by 2.27 = 0 - 1 = 0 M at L
Party E	1	0.27% divided by 2.27 = 0 - 1 = 0 M at L

Note: Party C with 23.36% of the vote only won four seats but qualified for 10, so theoretically deserved six Members at Large but as only five seats were available they were awarded only five Members at Large. New Results: Government 28, Opposition 25 (14, 9, 1, 1)

1956	57 possible seats (52 plus 5)	
Party A	39	45.84%
Balance	18	54.16% divided by 18 = 3.01%
Party B	10	28.32% divided by 3.01 = 9 - 10 won = -1 = no change
New Balance	8	25.84% divided by 8 = 3.23%
Party C	2	21.77% divided by 3.23 = 6 - 2 won = plus 4 M at L
Party D	0	3.11% divided by 3.23 = 0 - 0 = 0 M at L
Party E	1	0.16% divided by 3.23 = 0 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 39, Opposition 17 (10, 6, 1)

1960	57 possible seats (52 plus 5)	
Party A	32	38.83%
Balance	25	61.17% divided by 25 = 2.45%
Party B	16	32.73% divided by 2.45 = 13 - 16 won = - 3 = no chge
New Balance	9	28.44% divided by 9 = 3.16%
Party C	4	20.90% divided by 3.16 = 6 - 4 = plus 2 M at L
Party D	0	6.72% divided by 3.16 = 2 - 0 = plus 2 M at L

New Results: Government 32, Opposition 24 (16, 6, 2)

1963	57 possible members (52 plus 5)
Party A	33 40.83%
Balance	24 59.17% divided by 24 = 2.47%
Party B	14 27.80% divided by 2.47 = 11 - 14 = -3 = no change
New Balance	10 31.37% divided by 10 = 3.14%
Party C	5 19.98% divided by 3.14 = 6 - 5 won = plus 1 M at L
Party D	0 11.27% divided by 3.14 = 3 - 0 = plus 3 M at L

New Result: Government 33, Opposition 23 (14, 6, 3)

1966	61 possible seats (55 plus 6)
Party A	33 45.59%
Balance	28 54.41% divided by 28 = 1.94%
Party B	16 33.62% divided by 1.94 = 17 - 16 won = plus 1 M at L
Party C	6 20.24% divided by 1.95 = 10 - 6 won = plus 4 M at L

New Results: Government 33, Opposition 27 (17, 10)

1969	61 possible seats (55 plus 6)
Party A	38 46.79%
Balance	23 53.21% divided by 23 = 2.31%
Party B	12 33.92% divided by 2.31 = 14 - 12 = plus 2 M at L
Party C	5 19.03% divided by 2.31 = 8 - 5 won = plus 3 M at L

New Results: Government 38, Opposition 22 (14, 8)

1972	61 possible seats (55 plus 6)
Party A	38 39.59%
Balance	23 60.41% divided by 23 = 2.63%
Party B	10 31.16% divided by 2.63 = 11 - 10 won = plus 1 M at L
Party C	5 16.40 % divided by 2.63 = 6 - 5 won = plus 1 M at L
Party D	2 12.67% divided by 2.63 = 4 - 2 won = plus 2 M at L

New Results: Government: 38, Opposition 21 (11, 6, 4)

1975	61 possible seats (55 plus 6)
Party A	35 49.25%
Balance	26 50.75% divided by 26 = 1.95%
Party B	18 39.165 divided by 1.95 = 20 - 18 won = plus 2 M at L
Party C	1 7.24 % divided by 1.95 = 3 - 1 won = plus 2 M at L

Party D 1 3.86% divided by 1.95 = 1 - 1 won = 0 M at L

New Results: Government 35, Opposition 24 (20, 3, 1)

1979 63 possible seats (57 plus 6)
Party A 31 48.23%
Balance 32 51.77% divided by 32 = 1.62%
Party B 26 45.99% divided by 1.62 = 28 - 26 won = plus 2 M
at L
Party C 0 5.06% divided by 1.62 = 3 - 0 won = plus 3 M
at
L

New results: Government 31, Opposition 31 (28, 3). Minority government possible.

1983 63 possible seats (57 plus 6)
Party A 35 49.76%
Balance 28 50.24% divided by 28 = 1.79%
Party B 22 44.94% divided by 1.79 = 25 - 22 won = plus 3 M
at L
Party C 0 2.69% divided by 1.79 = 1 - 0 won = plus 1 M
at
L

New Results: Government 35, Opposition 26 (25, 1)

1986 76 possible seats (69 plus 7)
Party A 47 49.32%
Balance 29 50.68% divided by 29 = 1.75%
Party B 22 42.60% divided by 1.75 = 24 - 22 won = plus 2 M
at L
Party C 0 6.74 % divided by 1.75 = 3 - 0 won = plus 3 M
at L

New Results: Government 47, Opposition 27 (24, 3)

1991 83 possible seats (75 plus 8)
Party A 51 40.71%
Balance 32 59.29% divided by 32 = 1.85%
Party B 17 33.25% divided by 1.85 = 17 - 17 won = 0 M at L
Party C 7 24.05% divided by 1.85 = 13 - 7 won = plus 6 M
at L

New Results: Government 51, Opposition 30 (17, 13)

Conclusions:

The number of times that a majority government would retain their majority is 21.

The number of governments already a minority and would remain so is three (1924, 1941, 1952). They remained in power by forming coalitions.

The number of governments that would have been pushed from a majority to a minority is four (1903, 1920, 1979, and 1996).

However, the number of times that a party that didn't win a riding would have been represented in the House is 11 (1907, 1912, 1920 (two parties), 1945, 1960, 1963, 1979, 1983, 1986, 1996 and 2001). This is a significant result as this would have kept some parties alive, to fight in another election, and would more accurately have reflected the voting percentages.

The question of deciding which persons would be chosen as Members at Large to represent their party would be decided by reference to the percentages that they won in the ridings that they ran in, inasmuch as this system is based on percentages. So, in effect, the voters would choose the Members at Large, not their parties.

The favourable result of this system would be the chance that very small parties could earn a seat if their total percentage of the vote was large enough overall. In this way people who didn't vote because they couldn't support one of the major parties would be encouraged to vote. This would especially relate to younger voters, who seem apathetic to the present system.

The parties that would have problems with such a system could probably be the two major parties, who would fear losing support to the minor parties. But inasmuch as only four times out of 28 did the government lose its majority this seems a minor problem. On the other hand nine times the major opposition party won more seats than its percentage would have rated (1903, 1920, 1924, 1952, 1953, 1956, 1960, 1963, 1996) so that this system doesn't appear to be a threat to them.

Further Notes:

The watershed figure between a majority and minority government seems to be 39 - 40%, although in 1903 and 1979 governments were in minority positions with over 45%, and in 1960 a government with 39% managed to be a majority.

Although this system may appear to be complicated, I don't think it really is. Once the basics are understood, I think the public could cope with it easily, especially when it is explained that the reserve of Members at Large would be compensating for the overall percentage of the votes won.