

A compelling case for a new Voting System

"VOTE123"

"What the world needs now..."

by

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ABSTRACT:

- "VOTE123" (*V123*), as defined herein, is based upon a *preferential ballot* and a simplified form of the *Borda Count* voting method—which embodies the principle of "election by order of merit". This analysis objectively establishes the inherent superiority of *V123* over alternative voting systems.
- The fundamental question to be resolved is whether election should be on the criterion of highest **popularity**, as first-choice of the largest political faction [even if that is a *majority*, which it commonly is not]—or on the basis of "merit", as determined by highest overall **acceptability** to the entire electorate.
- Overlooked is the vitally important consequence that the criterion for election directly determines the common electoral strategies and behaviours of not just voters—but politicians and parties as well. Voters are driven to engage in "*strategic voting*", and politicians and parties are irresistibly drawn to divisive strategies and negative campaigning as proven formulas for electoral success. These anti-democratic behaviours, which are direct consequences of a *single-X* ballot, seriously undermine the integrity and health of the democratic system.
- Evaluation of electoral alternatives should be driven by clearly stated objectives, criteria and principles—and focus upon the potential for each alternative to foster positive and discourage negative political strategies and behaviours on the part of voters, politicians and parties.
- This study identifies eight criteria for an objective evaluation of voting systems [refer to Appendix, page 15, for detailed analysis]. From this analysis, *V123* is seen to be clearly superior to every alternative—particularly in promoting consensus building and cooperative behaviour while discouraging divisiveness. No other voting system provides such qualitative and substantive benefits.

*This analysis was produced as input to The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform established by the provincial government of British Columbia. The authors highly commended our government for this unprecedented initiative in grass-roots democracy—and the faith it demonstrates in the citizens. We've long believed that fundamental democratic reform is instrumental to the achievement of most other progressive reforms, and to creating a more healthy and mutually respectful relationship between the people and their government. However, without prior examination of the electoral system, the discovery of a simple but previously unrecognized alternative—which is clearly superior to all others—came as a completely unexpected revelation of great importance. As such, our mission is now to spread these findings far and wide because **V123**, the proposed new voting system, is not only the best choice for British Columbia, but equally important to all of the democracies of the world.*

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SUMMARY:

The process by which the political will of the people is expressed and transformed into election results is the very foundation of a democracy. At its core is the voting system, largely unexamined and underestimated, with enormous hidden impacts. Clearly the voting system directly shapes the range of political expression and election outcomes. Less obvious, but perhaps even more important, it also indirectly shapes the behaviour of voters, politicians and parties.

Evaluation of alternative voting systems should be based on objective criteria. Under those proposed in this analysis [refer to Appendix for detailed analysis], it is contended that: (1) Canada's existing voting system—*single-X* "first-past-the-post" (*1X-FPP*) is grossly defective and cannot be defended as being really democratic or representative of the will of the people; and (2) the most commonly proposed alternative, some form of "mixed member proportional representation" (*MMP*), while a vast improvement on *1X-FPP*, has serious defects and wouldn't likely appear as an attractive alternative were its supporters not so desperately anxious to replace *1X-FPP*, the deficiencies of which it only partially alleviates.

Fortunately, there is a much simpler and better alternative, designated in this analysis as "VOTE123" (*V123*). It is a simplified version of the Borda voting system, in which voters rank their top three choices, and the vote count is the sum of points for all first, second and third-place votes [suggested to be tallied as 3, 2 and 1 points respectively].

V123 is neither a complex nor original concept. But what is new is the unexpected revelation that the case for *V123*, when evaluated against the alternatives using objective criteria, is so truly compelling. People will see *V123* as a simple and natural improvement that is far more fair to everyone—enabling voters to express their preferences much more precisely, and have a greater chance of obtaining an acceptable election outcome. By eliminating the "strategic voting" and the "wasted vote" syndromes, it enables citizens to vote for their true preferences and still have an influence on the final result—even if their preferred choice is defeated. Further, by rewarding consensus positions while discouraging divisiveness, *V123* should also change the strategies and behaviour of politicians and parties—tending to reduce the rancour and negativity of political rhetoric while enhancing the quality of dialogue, which should become focused more on policy rather than personality. By substantially elevating the integrity of the political system, *V123* should reduce public cynicism and apathy while increasing participation. Only *V123* can claim to produce such profound and positive improvements.

Once the enormous importance and benefits of *V123* are appreciated, there should be a refocusing of the emerging movement for democratic reform, and a concerted effort on the part of all progressive activists and political parties to work together for its achievement as soon as possible. Indeed, given its clear superiority over the alternatives, and absence of any serious flaws or downside risks, there can be no principled reason to oppose its adoption.

WHY ELECTORAL REFORM IS NEEDED NOW:

- Democracy, in its inherited form, is a venerable but seriously deficient institution that badly needs a major overhaul. Democracy as it developed centuries ago is no longer adequate as the foundation for the legitimate governance of free people in the new millennium.
- Politics as it is practised is a dirty game. Since the advent of professional spin-doctors as a predominant political class, every weakness in the democratic process has been strategically exploited for partisan advantage. But parties and politicians (with presumed good intentions to serve the public's best interests) cannot be expected to reject divisive and negative campaign strategies if such practises comprise a winning formula under a given electoral system.

- Voters cannot be faulted for resorting to "*strategic voting*" as the perceived best protection of their interests.
- What must be faulted—and should be rejected—are voting systems that provoke such anti-democratic strategies and behaviours on the part of voters, politicians and parties.
- Citizens should recognize that democracy remains an unfulfilled vision—not some hallowed order of perfection which cannot be improved upon. Each generation can best honour past generations, and best serve future generations, by implementing all possible improvements to make democracy stronger and more true to its principles.
- Very few citizens are satisfied with democracy as it is today. And all free people should realize that democracy is both our great inheritance to enjoy—and responsibility to both defend and make better.

MODERN DEMOCRACY AS HIGH-STAKES GAME OF POLITICAL WAR:

- Politics is all about power. Politics is about how power is acquired and how it is used. The game of politics has the grandest prize of all—control over the levers of power of state—i.e. the power of government.
- The money-power relationship is a duality which is as intrinsic and universally fundamental as the Einstein energy-mass relationship. So politics is also about money.
- Money has enormous interest in politics—because it is about power, and that, in turn, is about money. So money is a major player in the game of politics—exercising considerable influence if not control over the political process. Out of direct self-interest, money always strives to determine the political winners, ensure access to whomever wins, and exert as much influence as possible over the political agenda and policies of government.
- Democracy—i.e. defined by Abraham Lincoln as government of the people, by the people and for the people—is inevitably on a collision course with the money-power relationship.
- Politics as it is practised in modern democracy is a highly professionalized game that is intensively focused upon the problem of power acquisition—by most major parties in the primary service of moneyed interests—under a nominally democratic voting process with some trappings of public accountability.
- Political campaigns are very similar to military campaigns in nature, motive and ethics. Strategically planned and executed, under the command of professional spin-doctors serving as the campaign generals for each party, the sole objective is to vanquish one's opponents—by whatever means—to capture the spoils of victory, in this case the power of government. And as with war, truth in political campaigns is always the first casualty and honour and honesty are next in the line of fire.
- Modern democracy, as it is played by the pros, is a cut-throat contest for power—not an enlightened exercise in seeking to determine and serve the will of the people.
- Distrust of politicians and governments, as well as public alienation from the political process, are clearly the consequences of frustration and cynicism engendered by the way the game of politics is now played.
- In light of the above, one might wonder whether the voting system really matters very much. The answer is that, while the major problems of democracy reside in the money-power relationship, the voting system is nonetheless enormously important. The voting system determines the rules—and hence the player strategies—by which the game of democracy is played.

HOW THE VOTING SYSTEM SHAPES POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIOUR:

- Highest popularity is a much lower standard that is more easily achieved than greatest acceptability. This is because it's always much easier to craft a political image and message targeted to gain the support of specific partisan factions, than it is to provide a more balanced platform that would be more acceptable to the broader public.
- Targeted partisan messages resonate much more strongly than consensus politics within the narrow political factions. But the fundamental problem is that partisan politics is highly divisive—whereas consensus politics unifies and serves the interests of society much better.
- Under *1X-FPP*, highest popularity is the necessary and sufficient criterion for victory. And in a multi-candidate contest, highest popularity is usually less than a *majority*. The level of support required for victory is further lowered by declining voter participation—which typically disadvantages the under-classes whose perception that their participation is futile is a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Hence, under *1X-FPP*, the major parties contending for political power, under the command of their spin-doctor cadre of campaign strategists, wage political warfare by striving to build their own partisan base while eroding the support for their primary adversary.
- Common winning strategies under *1X-FPP* are to play on the fears, partisan prejudices and hot-buttons of a party's base of support—while exploiting wedge issues (e.g. gay marriages, abortion, gun control, law and order, illegal immigration etc.) to divide the base of one's opponents, as well as demonizing them with issues of character, 'family values', scandals etc. None of this is about serving the will of the people, but it is a proven formula for success under *1X-FPP*. This is a direct consequence of the voting system—since it is unnecessary to gain the support or acceptance of a *majority* (with in some cases only 25% of eligible voters being sufficient for victory)—and without any political cost from alienating those who don't vote for you.
- Where *MMP* is implemented as a corrective to rectify the distorted results of a host *1X-FPP* system, it fails to address the more fundamental flaws of *1X-FPP*. Hence, with a *majority* of electoral seats awarded under *1X-FPP*, the adverse strategies and behaviours which it induces would still remain. It is noted that *MMP* could equally be applied as a corrective to any other host voting system—such as *IRV* or *V123*. But few advocates of *MMP* have apparently recognized the importance of the voting system, which is a serious omission on their part.
- *IRV*, despite being based upon a *preferential ballot* where candidates are rank-ordered, is essentially a popularity based electoral system with the bar raised to require *majority* support. But, because it stops counting votes once a *majority* is achieved—and does not count all of the second and third-place votes—*IRV* does not measure up to the standard of highest acceptability. However, in requiring that the winning party must at least not alienate a *majority* of the voting public—a higher standard than *1X-FPP* or *MMP*—*IRV* would provide a significant disincentive to negative campaign strategies and behaviour.
- *V123*, with its criterion of election being highest acceptability to the entire electorate, would clearly represent the highest standard—and one that could not be met by exploiting divisive partisan campaign strategies. *V123* would provide the highest incentives for consensus building, and the strongest disincentives for negative campaign strategies and behaviour.

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF V123:

The concept and specifications of the *V123* voting system are both simple and intuitive:

- Voters specify their selections in rank order on a *preferential ballot*. With three or more candidates, the recommended number of selections is three—but the concept could be implemented with 2 or more selections.
- All selections for all candidates are tallied at once (unlike *IRV*)—with differential scoring to reflect rank ordering (also unlike *IRV*).
- The recommended scoring for first, second and third-place votes is 3, 2, and 1 point respectively. Other point values might be adopted—including the possibility of a negative value for third-place vote to register voter disapproval; this is not recommended because: (1) it is believed that *V123* provides a fully effective way to determine the most acceptable candidate; (2) an important goal of *V123* is to promote a more positive political climate based on consensus; (3) negative voting would induce more negative campaigning and *strategic voting*.
- To express voting results as tangible numbers which the public might more easily relate to, the scores for each candidate could be normalized by dividing by the value assigned to a first-place vote (i.e. 3) and presented as the number of first-place-equivalent votes.
- It is recommended that a tie result could be resolved on the basis of greatest acceptance—i.e. being selected on the most ballots. Alternatively, it might be resolved on the basis of highest popularity—i.e. having the highest number of first-place votes.
- Ballots with fewer than called for selections (i.e. less than 3) pose a real problem under a differential scoring system (which *IRV* is not, since it counts second and third-place votes with equal value as first-place votes—if it counts them at all). The problem is that a voter who would make only one or two selections would be exercising a form of *strategic voting* that, if not prevented, would provide an advantage that was unfair to both other candidates and other voters who followed the rules and selected the designated number of candidates. Indeed, if permitted, *strategic voting* for only one candidate might well become the common practise—whereby *V123* would be effectively degraded into *1X-FPP*. With the integrity of the democratic system at stake, it would be only reasonable to reject ballots with insufficient selections. However, this might initially lead to a large number of spoiled ballots. Hence, it is recommended instead that a ballot with just a single selection should be scored as a second-place vote—and a ballot with only two selections scored as a second and third-place vote. This would provide a strong incentive for voters to comply with voting behaviour that is important for the health of the democratic system, while still registering all voting selections even for those voters who don't comply. Except for the extremely rare circumstance of a tie result where the given vote would be the margin of victory or defeat, the slight penalty would not impact the results. But if a party or candidate encouraged their supporters to engage in such *strategic voting*, they would be appropriately penalized for their adverse behaviour.

Given these voting rules, it is useful to consider the possible voter strategies under *V123*:

- In a healthy democracy, there should be at least three candidates who would reasonably represent the interests of any given voter. And in an enlightened democracy, all voters would be sufficiently familiar with the issues, parties and candidates to be able to indicate their three preferred selections in rank order. This should hopefully be the normal situation—and each voter would express their preferences without *strategic voting*.

- What if a voter feels the need for protection through *strategic voting* (i.e. to support the ‘lesser of evils’ in an effort to prevent the greater evil from winning)? If so, under *V123* that voter still has two selections which can be expressed for the truly preferred candidates. Whether the strategic vote is given as a first-place vote depends on how anxious the voter may be. But under *V123*, the adverse behaviour by parties and candidates should be much less.
- What if a voter is almost equally attracted to two parties? This arises if there are two parties with similar platforms—and under *1X-FPP*, the *vote splitting* between the two parties often leads to the overall defeat of each. Under *V123*, the supporters of such parties would all likely give them their first and second-place votes—so that neither party would be disadvantaged, and the stronger of the two would win (presuming that the combined support for these two parties exceeds the support of any third party—which latter might well be the winner under *1X-FPP*—Canadians may find this scenario only too familiar).
- What if a voter only knows or cares about one or two parties or candidates? As recommended, a ballot with insufficient selections would be counted but penalized. It would be important for voters to understand this—and the reasons why. In adopting *V123*, the public should understand that with greater power and freedom comes greater responsibility, and sometimes inconvenience—if the integrity of our democratic system is to be uplifted.
- What if a voter only knows or cares about one or two parties or candidates—but does not want their preferences to be penalized with reduced voting scores? This might well lead to a new form of *strategic voting*, where the voter cast second and/or third votes for some safe ‘fringe’ candidates in whom they had little or no interest, just to obtain maximum value for their preferred selection. This would be a great gift to the fringe candidates who are absolutely excluded under *1X-FPP* and *IRV*, as well as those independent or small party candidates who have no potential to reach the required threshold under *MMP*. This could be another major advantage of *V123*—to permit the rise of new alternatives, which is exceedingly difficult under the other voting systems. But voters contemplating such *strategic voting* should recognize that insincere votes count too, and present or future consequences might be unpredictable.

PROBLEMS WITH V123:

The many and profound advantages of the *V123* voting system are enormous. However, while there is no system that is without its own peculiar problems, what makes the case for *V123* truly compelling is its comparatively minor list in comparison with all other alternatives:

- Some voters might find it more challenging to select three candidates in rank order. However, in a healthy democracy, citizens should be more engaged and better informed than simply knowing which party they like best and/or detest most.
- If voters fail to select three candidates, they and their preferred party are penalized by their first-choice being scored as a second-place vote. But this is a small price to pay for a more healthy democracy.
- There is a small possibility with a large number of candidates that someone might be elected with less than *majority* support. But this should be a rare occurrence—unlike *1X-FPP* and *MMP* where it would be the norm. In any case, *V123* guarantees the election of the candidate with the highest acceptance of the entire electorate, which no other voting system can assure.
- *V123*, while remedying most of the defects of *1X-FPP*, elects each candidate on the criterion of highest acceptance and therefore does not produce proportional results. However, if party-proportionality is deemed to be necessary, the *MMP* corrective can be applied to the results of *V123*

just as well as any other voting system. Indeed, because of the considerable advantages of V123 that no other voting system can offer, there could be no objective case for implementing MMP without first implementing V123.

PROBLEMS WITH 1X-FPP:

The inherent defects of the *1X-FPP* voting system, with more than two candidates, are so numerous and profound that there could not possibly be any objective case for its retention:

- *1X-FPP* actively prevents any reasonable expression of the will of the people. It is an insult to voter intelligence, and a severe restriction on our democratic freedom.
- *1X-FPP* severely distorts the expressed will of the people into grossly unrepresentative and non-proportional results.
- *1X-FPP* drives voters to anti-democratic strategies and behaviour, such as *strategic voting*, as a matter of self-defence—thereby further distorting the true will of the people.
- The wasted vote syndrome induces more voters to not support their true preferences—thereby further distorting the true will of the people.
- Distorted voting induced by *1X-FPP* is a severe handicap to small parties, which are effectively excluded from gaining viability as credible alternatives. And the exclusion of new voices with different views undermines the health and integrity of the political system and government itself.
- The vote-splitting problem is another characteristic defect of *1X-FPP* the can seriously disadvantage parties, and alienate their supporters. Not uncommonly, it even determines the outcomes of elections [e.g. the Nader-Gore vote-splitting led to the (s)election of GW Bush].
- *1X-FPP* drives parties and politicians to anti-democratic strategies and behaviour as a proven winning formula. With election awarded on the low standard of *plurality*, and with low voting rates, it may only require 25-35% public support to be elected. Therefore, if a divisive and negative campaign can attract the largest partisan faction, there is no political cost to alienating the *majority*. While this fundamental flaw is not well understood by the public, it creates irresistible opportunities that the political spin-doctors cynically exploit on a regular basis. Hence, campaigns focused upon demonizing opponents and polarizing ‘wedge’ issues—exploiting partisan fears and hot-buttons—have become only too familiar as almost standard political practise under *1X-FPP*.
- *1X-FPP*—through its potent capacity to distort the will of the people in favour of the leading parties, leads naturally and almost inevitably to the political duopoly—i.e. the relationship under which the power of government is shared on a quasi-permanent basis between two parties. Any number of parties and candidates are free to contest elections, but only two parties have any chance of winning. The presence of other candidates and parties makes the system seem open—but it is effectively closed and almost immune to external forces. In business, it is well recognized that the power and shared interests of oligopolies are often in direct conflict with the public interest—which is best served by open competition. In politics, the political duopoly—a hallmark characteristic of *1X-FPP*—is equally unfair to its competition, and detrimental to the people’s interest.
- The tell-tale markers of *1X-FPP* are its very indictment: “strategic voting” for the “lesser of evils”, the “wasted” vote and “vote-splitting” syndromes, negative campaigning, political duopoly etc. A voting system that creates and rewards such anti-democratic negativity is unworthy of respectful consideration.

- The consequences of the many inherent defects of *1X-FPP* are directly responsible for reduced voting rates, respect for politicians and government—and increased cynicism, alienation and demand for democratic reform.

PROBLEMS WITH MMP:

MMP delivers party-proportionality, which overall is a major improvement. But if *MMP* is implemented on a host *1X-FPP* voting system, which it seems most if not all its advocates apparently accept as ok, then the *majority* of members would remain elected on the basis of *1X-FPP* and all of its other defects cited above would still remain. In any case, *MMP* unfortunately has some significant disadvantages of its own:

- *MMP* creates either larger electoral districts or more seats, or a combination thereof.
- *MMP* creates a second class of elected members that are not directly accountable to the electorate—providing more power to the party and less power to the people. There is an important democratic principle at stake here, not to mention the potential for backroom deals if parties hold a number of “free passes” to the seats of political power.
- There is something rather suspect about a touted solution that is proposed to be implemented as a half-measure rather than in pure form. If party-proportionality is so good, why not go with pure PR rather than just *MMP*? Its advocates might say that it offers the ‘best of both’—i.e. both party-proportionality results along with district representation and accountability. But surely they’re not claiming that *1X-FPP* is a worthy voting system that should be preserved—yet they seem only too willing to prop it up if they get their fix.
- *MMP*, with its threshold to exclude small parties, might represent an even greater barrier to new progressive parties—given that a vote for them would be wasted, whereas a vote for an established progressive party (that had surpassed the threshold) would actually count.
- *MMP* may even be less than fair to parties that benefit from it. *MMP* would not reward (and arguably under-represent) parties that were strong second or third-choices but weaker as first-choice. By contrast, such parties might be more fairly represented under *V123*—which would reflect their true “merit” as measured by overall acceptability.
- *MMP* almost guarantees minority governments. The authors personally view this to be a net positive, but some people prefer *majority* governments for their greater strength and stability. In any case, it is a characteristic difference of *MMP*.

PROBLEMS WITH IRV:

IRV is basically a *popularity* (rather than *acceptability*) based voting system—with the bar raised to require *majority* support. Although *IRV* uses a *preferential ballot*, its iterative vote counting procedure fails to count all of the second and third-place votes, and fails to differentiate the value of each placement. Hence, *IRV* unfortunately fails to ensure that the candidate with highest acceptability is elected—despite the fact that the ballot contains all necessary information for this determination.

CONCLUSION:

From the findings of this study [please refer to the Appendix for a detailed analysis], the crucial importance of the voting system should be clear to all. There can be no question that *1X-FPP* is fundamentally defective and incompatible with the right of free people to be governed by a system which embodies democratic integrity. Further, it has been clearly established that the current trend of looking to either *MMP* or *IRV* as a remedy is seriously misguided.

While *1X-FPP* should objectively be seen as the worst of all so-called democratic voting systems, the two most commonly proposed and deployed alternatives, *MMP* and *IRV*, are both seriously lacking and should also be rejected. Indeed it is not only Canada's voting system that ought to be reformed—but even all of the more democratically advanced nations are actually using second-rate voting systems.

Fixing our dysfunctional democratic system is simply much too important for us not to do right—and the only alternative that fully meets a reasonable set of criteria is *V123*.

Major benefits from the adoption of the *V123* voting system include:

- Reversing the world-wide trend of people's alienation from their governments. The people will see that their government is sincerely trying to make the voting system more fair to everyone. Most people will see *V123* as a natural and logical improvement that gives them better voting options. It allows them to not only vote the way they really want—but still enables them to have a say in the result even if their first-choice is defeated.
- For the first time in multi-choice contests, the true will of the people would actually be expressed.
- For the first time in multi-choice contests, the results would truly reflect the will of the people—as all members elected would be the winners on "merit"—with the highest acceptability to the entire electorate. Results would not be perverted by the false expression of the people's will, driven to defensive voting for "the lesser of evils", under the duress of the "strategic voting" and "wasted" vote syndromes.
- The public perception of politicians and government, and their claim to democratic legitimacy, would be considerably enhanced. Public cynicism and apathy towards politics should be reduced—and participation rates in the political process should increase.
- More votes would be cast for smaller parties—reducing the established parties' stranglehold on power—and providing the opportunity for new alternatives to emerge as potentially winning choices. The rise of new parties and new voices should enhance the scope and quality of political debate, focusing more on policies rather than personalities. This should help to improve the standards of political discourse and conduct by all parties. There should also be some reduction of the power of money to hijack democracy and dictate the agenda—which invariably puts corporate interests ahead of the peoples' needs.
- *V123* should result in a significant decline in divisive politics and negative campaign strategies. These are standard practice under *1X-FPP* because they often produce a winning number of first-choice votes. But such aggressively partisan practices under *V123* would not gain much second or third-choice support from the *majority* who prefer other candidates. Hence, rather than the spurious divisive issues and campaign rhetoric exploiting scandal, prejudice and fear—which now form the standard political diet served up by many politicians and their spin-doctors under *1X-FPP*—the behaviour and strategies that should be most successful and predominate under *V123* would be consensus building and attention to the real needs of the people.

Democracy today is in perilous condition, and we are nearing the pivot point at which our future systems of governance will be determined. As effective sovereignty is stripped away under globalization and the rising powers of global corporations, governments are rapidly becoming incapable of meeting the needs and expectations of citizens. Not surprisingly, citizens are continually becoming more frustrated, cynical and disillusioned with their governments.

If our dysfunctional democracies are not fixed, there is the ominous prospect of authoritarian or potentially even fascist regimes—with citizens pitted one against another—with increasing risks of wars, revolutions and terrorism. This is not to predict that such calamitous prospects would occur—but simply to draw attention to the fact that we're moving into unknown territory, with new and greater risks than before—and with no guarantee that such frightening futures could not arise. So fixing democracy is not just an option—it is a necessity—if our freedoms are to be preserved, and the legitimacy of governments is to be restored.

Voting reform may not prove to be a sufficient fix for the ills of our democratic system—but it is certainly the right place to start. And the best thing to do now is to implement *V123*.

APPENDIX TO THE STUDY OF “VOTE123”

MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission is to work with others to change the way the world votes:

- *To inform people of the serious negative consequences of existing systemically defective voting systems, and how these induce anti-democratic behaviour on the part of voters, politicians and parties—hence seriously degrading the quality of all democracies.*
- *To present V123 as a simple and intuitively more fair voting system that effectively removes the major defects and adverse consequences of existing voting systems.*
- *To inspire people to demand that their governments and politicians should expeditiously produce the necessary reforms to build the most truly democratic systems possible—starting with the V123 voting system.*
- *To call upon all governments, politicians, parties and citizens to work in a non-partisan way on the collaborative process of building the most truly democratic systems of governance and political decision making—starting with the V123 voting system.*

NB: As a demonstration project, the authors intend to provide a working example of *V123* through the website www.vote123.info — inviting the people of the world to express their voting preferences on the upcoming American presidential election; results under *V123* and *1X-FPP* will be compared.

BACKGROUND:

People and political leaders here and everywhere are increasingly aware that democracy is becoming more dysfunctional, as it dissolves in a downward spiral of public apathy and perceived irrelevance—especially amongst younger citizens. Governments and political parties are steadily declining in public respect and legitimacy, as reflected via steadily declining public participation in the democratic process.

The underlying problems are more complex than generally realized, but most people intuitively know that there is no simple fix. However, in Canada there is an increasing groundswell from several parties and many activists advocating some form of proportional representation. Unfortunately, there is still very little public awareness of other possible alternatives, and a general failure to appreciate the immense importance of the voting system in determining not only the results but also the very health of our democracy.

Our inherited *single-X* “first-past-the-post” (*1X-FPP*) voting system is just about the worst and most unjustified way to conduct an election with more than two candidates, and should be relegated to the dust bin of history—as it has already been in almost all democratic countries other than Canada, the UK and the USA. With multiple candidates, *1X-FPP* regularly results in gross distortions of the public will. Worse, it precipitates anti-democratic behaviour by politicians, parties and the voting public.

While proportional representation would be an immense improvement, it is founded upon false assumptions and only partially achieves its objectives. Worse, its various implementations as “Mixed Member Proportional Representation” (*MMP*) inescapably suffer from undesirable complexity and the

creation of two classes of elected members—whereby those elected through *MMP* are more directly beholden to the party than to the electorate.

Most other electoral reforms are based upon some form of *preferential ballot*, where some or all of the candidates are rank-ordered by each voter. The most common of these is “instant runoff voting” (*IRV*)—sometimes referred to as “majority preference voting” (*MPV*), or “alternative vote” (*AV*). *IRV* emulates the iterative voting procedure used at political conventions—where votes are tallied by totalling the first-place votes for all candidates and, until some candidate achieves a *majority*, eliminating the lowest placed candidate and reallocating those votes to the indicated next choice.

The recommended reform is a different system of scoring a *preferential ballot*, designated in this analysis as “VOTE123” (*V123*). It is a simplified and more practical version of the Borda voting system, in which voters rank their top three choices, and the vote count is the sum of points for all first, second and third-place votes (suggested to be tallied as 3, 2 and 1 points respectively).

The Borda voting system was presented in 1770 by Jean-Charles de Borda, as “*election by order of merit*”, in a paper to France’s l’Académie Royale des Sciences. Instead of the *IRV* iterative procedure of dropping the lowest candidate and reallocating those votes, the *Borda Count* scores each ballot by awarding points to each candidate reflecting their rank order—i.e. zero points to the lowest ranked candidate, one point to the next lowest ranked candidate, and increasing by one for each level until all candidates have been scored. On each ballot, the score for each candidate is therefore equal to the number of lower ranked candidates, and the winner is simply the candidate with the most points—i.e. the winner by order of “merit”—as the candidate with the highest overall acceptability to the entire electorate.

The advantages of a *preferential ballot* using the *Borda Count* scoring system are:

- Under its guiding principle of “election by order of merit”, the Borda voting system recognizes that, when there are more than two choices, the true reflection of the will of the people cannot be obtained simply by counting the first-place votes alone. Instead, second and third-place votes etc. also need to be counted—with decreasing value for each lower ranked position, to reflect the level of voter preference for each candidate.
- It is natural for voters to view the acceptability of a given set of choices as having a rank order—and to expect that a proper expression of their will should enable them to show their voting preference according to rank order.
- All votes cast are counted, including second and third-place votes etc., at the same time, for all voters and candidates. This ensures that the winning candidate is indeed the one who is most acceptable [and by implication least unacceptable] to all voters.
- Voters have no need to compromise their voting choice through “*strategic voting*”—since they can vote for their first preference [even if not perceived to be “electable”, and without the problem of it being a “*wasted* vote”]—while at the same time participating in the election decision amongst the other candidates.
- Neither parties nor voters would ever again be stymied by the “*vote splitting*” problem—where the division of votes between two similar parties would be to their mutual disadvantage and probable defeat—whereas this would not occur under Borda or *V123* if each received solid second-choice votes from each other’s supporters.
- Because second [and third ...] place votes are counted, parties and candidates will for the first time need to be concerned about their **acceptability to non-supporters**. Presuming that voters would punish divisive policies and behaviour, one could expect parties to engage much more in consensus building and much less in negative campaigning and personal attacks.

The difference between *V123* and the Borda voting system is that Borda requires voters to rank all choices—whereas *V123* is limited to the top three choices. The difference is more a matter of practicality than principle, and the concept could equally be applied to two or four choices etc. The reason for limiting the number of choices is that equitable scoring requires all voters to register the same number of choices. In cases where there may be a large number of choices and where the voter may not have knowledge of some choices, it seems unreasonable to require all choices to be ranked. In any case, it would seem only reasonable that election should be based upon highly ranked choices and, since few voters would be likely to know or care about more than three candidates, limiting each voter's selection to their top three choices would seem sufficient to enable a pretty accurate expression of the public will.

To quote from an analysis of voting and election decision methods from the website of the American Mathematical Society, "The way that voting and elections are often described in democratic societies is that the results are somehow the inevitable consequences of the input of the voters. The winner of the election is in some sense the people's choice, growing in an organic way out of the desires the electorate has for which person should lead it." However, the seemingly simple concepts of democracy and elections are actually surprisingly complex, and the consequences of different voting and election decision methods can profoundly influence the outcomes. Indeed, even with the very same expression of the will of the people, as the AMS analysis demonstrates, different voting systems may well produce different winners.

Furthermore, if the voting system is seen as the rules of the 'game' of democracy—determining how voters express their preferences, and how the votes are counted—it should also be expected that different rules might well induce different strategies and behaviours on the part of voters, politicians and parties.

Before one can establish objective criteria for electoral reforms necessary to achieve truly representative democracy, it is important to have a good comprehension not only of the defective results of the existing voting system—but also the underlying processes and causal behaviours and strategies practiced in self-interest by voters, politicians and parties. In particular, it is contended that the common and successful behaviours and strategies are themselves simply direct and logical consequences of the voting system. Hence, if the results of the existing system are deemed to be unrepresentative and unacceptable, an effective alternative system cannot be achieved unless it is founded upon and promotes more positive behaviours and strategies, while minimizing the existing negativity, by voters, politicians and parties.

Objective standards for a healthy democracy, and appropriate criteria for electoral reform, are:

- The true will of the people relative to the available alternatives should be accurately expressed.
- The electoral result should fairly and accurately represent the true will of the people, on the basis of overall "merit" and acceptability as judged by the entire electorate—i.e. reflecting both public approval and disapproval of each alternative.

But it should also be noted that, beyond voting system reform, *'real democracy'*—i.e. using Lincoln's definition of *"government of the people, by the people, and for the people"*—would also require further significant democratic reforms, such as:

- The electorate should be adequately and fairly informed about each alternative—through equitable access to and coverage by the major media—and appropriate controls to minimize the impact of money on the political process.
- The institutions of government and party politics should be democratically reformed to reduce the excessive concentration of executive powers.
- The people should be empowered with the capacity to specifically direct their representative government through citizen initiated referenda, and to hold them accountable through a process of recall—i.e. *'direct democracy'*.

Whether voting reform will prove to be a sufficient remedy to the ills of our dysfunctional democracy is doubtful. However, it is certainly the right place to start, and is the task at hand for us to now undertake to the best of our abilities.

CRITERIA FOR VOTING SYSTEM EVALUATION:

- a) ***Principle of “merit”.***
Each elected candidate should be the winner based upon “merit”—i.e. highest overall approval of the entire electorate—reflecting both **popularity amongst supporters** as well as **acceptability to those who prefer another alternative**.
- b) ***Principle of majority acceptance.***
As a criterion of legitimacy, it seems only reasonable to expect that no representative should be elected without the acceptance of a *majority* [i.e. greater than 50%] of the voters. Further, it is suggested that any voting system that elects candidates without *majority* acceptance cannot claim to be truly representative of the public will. While it could not be expected in a multi-candidate contest that any candidate would be the first-choice of a *majority* of voters, it is neither reasonable nor necessary that voters should have no say in electing their representative if their first-choice is defeated. Hence under more truly representative voting systems, the criterion of *majority* acceptance is a reasonable expectation.
- c) ***Principle of representative accountability.***
All elected members should be directly elected by—and accountable to—the voter constituency which they represent.
- d) ***Principle of proportional representation.***
It may be argued that the principle of proportional representation, while intuitively fair and desirable, should be deemed to be inapplicable because it is in contradiction with the principles of “merit”, *majority* acceptance and direct accountability of representatives. For these reasons, the principle of proportional representation is considered in this analysis as a desirable characteristic—but with a major caveat that it is unfortunately a flawed solution to a more complex problem. Nonetheless, it is certainly reasonable to be concerned not simply with the equitability of the voting process—but also the equitability of the results it produces.
- e) ***Principle of political diversity, access and non-exclusion.***
To foster diversity of representation and widen both participation and the political debate, the voting system should provide a level playing field that facilitates rather than excludes the access of small parties and independent candidates.
- f) ***Principle of voter protection.***
From the perspective of an individual voter, one’s vote is decisive if and only if it breaks a tie between the two leading candidates. If a voter finds each of the perceived leading candidates to be undesirable but one worse than another, and if that vote becomes the decisive vote, then that person’s vote should enable the election of the perceived “lesser of evils”.
- g) ***Principle of no unintended consequences.***
The election result should reflect the true preference of the voters. This would of course be true if voters actually voted according to their true preferences. But this normal behaviour and desired result might not occur under voting systems which induce perverse voting behaviour—as is the case with the “*strategic voting*” and “*wasted vote*” syndromes.

h) *Principle of democratic practices.*

To the greatest extent possible, the voting system should foster democratically constructive behaviour—and discourage adverse practices—by voters, politicians and parties. In particular, voters should be liberated to vote according to their true preferences—with no perceived need to defend themselves by “*strategic voting*” for “the lesser of evils”, or concern that their vote would be “*wasted*”. Politicians and parties should be rewarded for consensus building and cooperative behaviour, and punished for exploiting divisive tactics, and negative campaigning focused upon personalities rather than issues.

In acknowledging that the set of possible criteria for the evaluation of voting systems is both open-ended and quite subjective in its definition and importance, the above principles are given as a reasonable and sufficient set for an objective comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. But two other factors should also be noted.

Firstly there is the issue of voter disapproval. Despite the reality that voter disapproval is indeed the determining factor behind a substantial percentage of votes—with it being widely recognized that voter selections are often effectively a referendum on an incumbent politician or party—it is not suggested here that voters should have the capability of expressing direct disapproval of candidates. If direct disapproval was a ballot option, a candidate’s overall acceptability would be determined by subtracting the disapproval from the approval votes—in which circumstance a candidate who polarized the electorate might well end up with a zero or maybe even negative total (which may well be a very reasonable evaluation of that person’s suitability as representative of the entire electorate)! Without arguing against this voting option, it is however felt to be highly desirable to make politics more positive and less negative—and it is believed that *V123* achieves the same objectives through a mechanism that is both simpler and more conducive to positive behaviours. Also, it would seem likely that a ballot that provided for the direct expression of voter disapproval would lead to new forms of *strategic voting*—whereby most ballots would probably register disapproval for all but the preferred candidate—essentially negating the intent of such an option.

Secondly, there is the very important issue of the quality of government that would result under each voting system. Beyond the comparative merits of each voting system, such issues as the strength, stability, effectiveness and responsiveness of resulting governments are major considerations. These factors are addressed in the analysis of the broader ramifications of each voting system.

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE VOTING SYSTEMS:

1. 1X-FPP.

Under these criteria, our traditional *single-X* “First-Past-the-Post” (*1X-FPP*) voting system is clearly exposed as grossly defective and fundamentally unacceptable.

a) *Principle of “merit”.*

The *Single-X* ballot is an insultingly blunt instrument which, whenever there are more than two choices, actively prevents the expression of public will with the specificity required to determine a winner based upon “merit” (i.e. highest overall approval of the entire electorate—reflecting both popularity amongst supporters as well as acceptability to those who prefer another alternative).

b) *Principle of majority acceptance.*

In multi-candidate races, *1X-FPP* commonly elects winners without *majority* acceptance. As such,

1X-FPP effectively disenfranchises the *majority* of voters from participating in the election decision—preventing the possible emergence of a consensus candidate with *majority* acceptance.

c) ***Principle of representative accountability.***

1X-FPP does ensure that all elected members are directly elected by and accountable to their voter constituency.

d) ***Principle of proportional representation.***

It is of course precisely because of the grossly distorted results of *1X-FPP* that *MMP* was conceived.

e) ***Principle of political diversity, access and non-exclusion.***

1X-FPP is the embodiment of a voting system designed to exclude minority voices. It thrives upon the narrowing of public participation and the political debate, and it effectively excludes the access required for small parties and independent candidates to achieve political viability.

f) ***Principle of voter protection.***

If a voter finds each of the perceived leading candidates to be undesirable but one worse than another, then the only protection under *1X-FPP* is for that person to practice "*strategic voting*"—i.e. to vote for the "lesser of evils" rather than "wasting" one's vote on one's true preference. In actuality, this hard choice makes "*strategic voting*" such a common occurrence as to become a characteristic of *1X-FPP*. Most regrettably, it is routinely exploited by the leading parties through the almost irresistible winning strategy of playing the "fear" factor against one's opponents, and touching "hot-button" issues and prejudices. Further, this factor is also extremely prejudicial to the prospects of small parties—severely restricting if not eliminating their potential to become credible political forces in the public mind—and thereby perpetuating the narrow political debate and effective mind-lock by the major parties.

g) ***Principle of no unintended consequences.***

Because the "*strategic voting*" and "*wasted vote*" syndromes are so prevalent as to become a virtual hallmark of *1X-FPP*, these factors produce major distortions of the true will of the people. The resulting vote is some bizarre mixture of what some people really want, contaminated with the defensive selections of many other voters—based upon how they fear the *majority* might vote—this being the product of endless manipulation of the public mind by the political spin-doctors, pollsters and pundits. Under these circumstances, the true will of the people is both unknown and unknowable, and there can be no assurance that the voting result under *1X-FPP* is not an unintended consequence.

h) ***Principle of democratic practices.***

As previously explained, the *1X-FPP* voting system actively discourages democratically constructive behaviour—and fosters adverse practices—by voters, politicians and parties. In particular, voters are cowed into voting against their true preferences—with the perceived need to defend themselves by "*strategic voting*" for "the lesser of evils". Politicians and parties are rewarded for anti-democratic behaviour and divisive tactics that exploit the fears and prejudices of the people, and heavily engage in negative campaigning focused upon personalities rather than issues.

As the voting system is at the core of the democratic process, the *1X-FPP* voting system should be seen as the fundamentally inadequate foundation which has led to serious dysfunction in our system of governance. *1X-FPP* is an extremely discriminatory voting system which distorts the true will of the people and produces unjustified voting results—regularly electing candidates who lack *majority* support and perhaps may not even be the ones most acceptable to the electorate—and often providing the dictatorial power of *majority* governments to parties that fall well short of *majority* support. Hence, *1X-FPP* actively discriminates in favour of the winners—and against all other candidates, parties and the will

of the people. It also actively distorts the very expression of the will of the people, by driving many voters to actually vote against their true preferences, under the so-called “*wasted vote*” and “*strategic voting*” syndromes. Given these facts, under *1X-FPP* nobody can possibly know what the true will of the people actually is.

And given that it is not necessary under *1X-FPP* to be acceptable to a majority of voters, politicians and parties know that divisive political policies and tactics exploiting people’s fears and prejudices can be a winning strategy simply through appealing to the largest minority by using any trick that works with enough people—typically by pushing their “fear” and “hot buttons”.

Given that *1X-FPP* fosters unprincipled and adverse behaviour on the part of voters, politicians and parties, the increasingly negative public attitudes of cynicism, distrust and apathy towards politics, politicians and the political system itself should not be surprising. The result of all this negativity is a deepening malaise and increasing dropout rate—which is particularly prevalent among the younger ‘should-be’ voters—where a serious generation gap is arising which increasingly challenges the legitimacy of our system of supposedly democratic elections and governance. The general perception by the dropouts, most disturbing amongst the young, is that politics is a dishonest game that is not worthy of their participation—which would only be a futile exercise that served to perpetuate a system controlled by money which would never serve their interests. And such serious doubts and frustration are also increasingly felt by many of the older citizens who still vote—primarily as a practice of faith, and sense of civic duty.

For all these reasons, one must conclude that replacing *1X-FPP* is mandatory if there is truly a serious commitment to fixing what’s wrong and building a political system with the integrity to be worthy of public confidence and wider participation.

2. *MMP*:

This is the political context that has given rise to an increasing groundswell from the various parties and many activists advocating some form of proportional representation. While *MMP* would clearly be a great improvement on *1X-FPP*, proportional representation is founded upon false assumptions, only partially achieves its objectives, and introduces its own set of problems.

Worse, its various implementations as “Mixed Member Proportional Representation” (*MMP*) inescapably suffer from undesirable complexity and the creation of two classes of elected members—where those elected through PR are more beholden to the party than to the voters.

As evaluated against the given criteria, *MMP* is seen to be an unfortunate compromise that leaves enormous space for a superior solution. Indeed, from an awareness of better alternatives, it is difficult not to see *MMP* as a band-aid solution that is quite incapable of covering the gaping wounds to the body politic caused by *1X-FPP*. (It should be noted that *MMP* would be equally applicable to a voting system based on a *preferential ballot*—alas, few of its advocates apparently see the importance of implementing a real solution to the terrible problems arising from *1X-FPP*.)

a) *Principle of “merit”*.

With *MMP* implemented as a corrective upon a host *1X-FPP* voting system, it doesn’t permit voters to indicate an order of preference—hence doesn’t provide any opportunity for election of candidates on the basis of “merit”—i.e. highest overall approval of the entire electorate. Worse, those members selected to office from party lists, whether personally meritorious or not, certainly cannot claim to satisfy the criterion of merit.

- b) *Principle of majority acceptance.*
MMP perpetuates the election of candidates without the acceptance of a *majority* of voters.
- c) *Principle of representative accountability.*
MMP is incompatible with the principle of representative accountability. The objective and defining feature of *MMP* is to elect some members from party lists, for parties that are under-represented by *1X-FPP*. This creates a second class of members who are not directly elected by and accountable to any voter constituency—who are therefore more beholden to the party than the electorate.
- d) *Principle of proportional representation.*
 The principle of proportional representation is of course the very essence of *MMP*. But it comes only with compromise to the principles of “merit”, *majority* acceptance and direct accountability of representatives. Also, by focusing solely on political parties, it ignores the broader principle of proportional representation as it might be applied with equal or greater merit to any of the important demographic characteristics such as gender, age, class etc. *MMP* perpetuates the false premise which is the very foundation of representative democracy—i.e. that any candidate or party can properly represent the interests of all constituents in all matters—and that proportionality of representation on the basis of political choice is more important to citizens than proportionality in any of the demographic categories which define an individual’s identity. Clearly the disproportionate representation relative to gender, age and class are also quite profound—and arguably might be even more important to address, with perhaps even greater potential to improve the quality of our democracy, than simply remedying the injustice to small parties inflicted by *1X-FPP*—which is the sole focus and result of *MMP*. Seen in this light, the intuitively attractive principle of proportionality is clearly much more complex and problematic—which might then leave one more inclined to place trust in the principles of “merit”, accountability and diversity.
- e) *Principle of political diversity, access and non-exclusion.*
MMP would foster diversity of representation and widen both participation and the political debate—for those lesser but broadly based parties which are strong enough to meet the minimum threshold required to achieve representation. However, in so doing it may actually add yet another impediment to any new and smaller parties and independent candidates—given the severe exclusion imposed by a *Single-X* ballot, and the natural inclination for voters not to waste their vote on a party that might not achieve the threshold.
- f) *Principle of voter protection.*
 Given that *MMP* does not replace the *Single-X* ballot and the election of constituency-based candidates under the processes and logic of *1X-FPP*, it does not replace the risks and corresponding defensive motives behind *strategic voting*. Hence, if one finds each of the perceived leading candidates to be undesirable but one worse than another, one would still then be driven to *strategic voting* for the “lesser of evils”.
- g) *Principle of no unintended consequences.*
 Given that *MMP* would not eliminate the practice of *strategic voting*, the possibility of unintended consequences remains. And this serious flaw is directly attributable to the continuation of a *Single-X* ballot—which is the fundamental problem—which *MMP* would only perpetuate and not eliminate. While the *MMP* corrective would establish overall proportionality through selection from party lists, election of representatives would still be vulnerable to the full set of problems under *1X-FPP*.
- h) *Principle of democratic practices.*
 For reasons explained above, one should recognize that overlaying *MMP* on a *Single-X* ballot would not eliminate the adverse behaviours which that induces on the part of voters, politicians and parties. In particular, voters would not be liberated to vote according to their true preferences—with no need to defend themselves by “*strategic voting*” for “the lesser of evils”. And politicians and parties

would still be rewarded for adverse behaviour and divisive tactics that exploit the fears and prejudices of the people, and they would probably continue engaging in negative campaigning focused on personalities rather than issues.

MMP is a highly discriminatory hybrid system—due mostly to the perpetuation of *1X-FPP* as the underlying voting system through which most candidates would still be elected. While *MMP* compensates for the discrimination by *1X-FPP* against parties which are under-represented and meet the required threshold, *MMP* continues the discrimination against smaller parties and independent candidates. The many pathological voting practices and results of *1X-FPP* also remain.

Despite the fact that *MMP* would clearly be a huge improvement on *1X-FPP*, it would nonetheless be a sad mistake that fails to address the more substantive factors and suffers from other problems of its own making. It is too complex. It increases the power of parties and their controlling elites. But worst of all, it only serves to prop up the *Single-X* ballot—which more than any other electoral change is essential to replace, because of the multitude of distortions and adverse behaviours which it engenders.

3. *IRV* (also known as *MPV*, or *AV*):

Beyond *MMP*, the next most commonly proposed voting reform is “instant runoff voting” (*IRV*)—sometimes referred to as “majority preference voting” (*MPV*), or “alternative vote” (*AV*). Being based upon a *preferential ballot*, it thereby avoids the most adverse consequences of the *Single-X* ballot which afflict both *FPP* and *MMP*. Under *IRV*, voters rank order the candidates. *IRV* emulates the iterative voting procedure used at political conventions—where votes are tallied by totalling the first-place votes for all candidates and, until some candidate achieves a *majority*, dropping the lowest placed candidate and reallocating those votes to the indicated next choice.

IRV, despite being based upon a *preferential ballot* where candidates are rank-ordered, is essentially a popularity based voting system with the bar raised to require *majority* support. As such, election under *IRV* requires a significantly higher standard of support than *1X-FPP* or *MMP*, but it still stops counting votes once a *majority* is achieved—and does not measure up to the standard of highest acceptability.

a) *Principle of “merit”.*

IRV fails to meet this criterion—due to unfortunate irrationalities within its complex vote counting system. As such, *IRV* squanders the potential for election on the basis of merit that is embodied in its *preferential ballot*, which provides an explicit expression of the people’s will. In failing to count second and third-place votes, *IRV* unnecessarily shares the same fundamental defect as *1X-FPP* and *MMP*—i.e. failure to reflect the overall acceptability of candidates to the entire electorate.

b) *Principle of majority acceptance.*

IRV meets the criterion that elected candidates must have the acceptance of a *majority* of voters. Indeed, *IRV* is perhaps best understood by one of its synonymous names—“majority preference voting” (*MPV*). *IRV* is essentially like an *FPP* system where the bar has been raised to require a *majority*, which is arrived at by the iterative *IRV* procedure of dropping the lowest ranked candidate and reallocating those votes to their next choice selections.

c) *Principle of representative accountability.*

IRV meets the criterion that all elected members should be directly selected by and accountable to their voter constituency.

- d) *Principle of proportional representation.*
IRV does not address the issue of proportional representation. However, just as *MMP* brings party proportionality to *1X-FPP*, it could equally be applied to a *preferential ballot* as used in *IRV* or *V123*.
- e) *Principle of political diversity, access and non-exclusion.*
 Given that *IRV* awards the election to the first candidate achieving a *majority* of votes, it is in this respect similar to the “first-past-the-post” voting system—and therefore suffers from most of the adverse consequences of *1X-FPP*. Hence, although voters express their preferences in rank order, the vote counting rules of *IRV* fail to foster diversity of representation, and effectively exclude access by small parties and independent candidates. Indeed, by raising the bar to require a *majority*, *IRV* is even more exclusionary than *1X-FPP*.
- f) *Principle of voter protection.*
 As *IRV* is effectively an FPP system with the bar raised to produce a *majority* via the vote counting procedure, voters under *IRV* face the same pressure to make their first-choice vote count—with no assurance that their second-choice would ever be counted. Hence the “*strategic voting*” and “*wasted vote*” syndromes remain operative, which would lead to similar adverse behaviours and distortions of the public will as *1X-FPP*.
- g) *Principle of no unintended consequences.*
 In applying the criterion of majority acceptance, *IRV* reduces the risk of unintended consequences. However, in failing to count all second and third place votes, there remains the possibility that the candidate with highest acceptability may not be elected—which may be considered as an irrational and unintended consequence.
- h) *Principle of democratic practices.*
 While *IRV* would be somewhat better than *1X-FPP*, overall it is a misguided effort that would not substantially improve democratic practices. Politicians and parties would need to broaden their appeal to achieve acceptability by a *majority*. But voters would not be liberated to vote according to their true preferences—i.e. the need to defend against “the lesser of evils” would remain unchanged, as would the distorting effects of the “*strategic voting*” and “*wasted vote*” syndromes.

IRV is also a discriminatory voting system which may distort the true will of the people and produce unjustified voting results. *IRV* discriminates in favour of the winners—and against all other candidates—especially the smaller parties and independent candidates. *IRV* also distorts the will of the people, by failing to eliminate the “*wasted vote*” and “*strategic voting*” syndromes.

In summary, *IRV* is an unfortunately flawed alternative which should clearly be rejected. But it is important to recognize that its major defects arise not from the *preferential ballot*—which is sadly misused and abused—but from its vote counting system, which suffers from being both overly complex and simplistic at the same time.

4. *V123*:

Beyond *IRV*, the recommended alternative is designated as “Vote 1-2-3” (*V123*). It is also based upon a *preferential ballot* in place of the *Single-X* ballot, and is therefore a vast improvement upon *MMP*. Under *V123*, voters rank their top three choices, and the vote count is the sum of points for all first, second and third-place votes (suggested to be tallied as 3, 2 and 1 points respectively). *V123* also remedies the identified deficiencies of *IRV* while also avoiding its complexity of open-ended iterations. As objectively determined from evaluation under the given criteria, *V123* is clearly superior to all other alternatives.

- a) ***Principle of “merit”.***
V123 is derived from the Borda system, which was conceived upon the principle of “merit”. As such, *V123* is clearly superior to *IRV*, *MMP* and *1X-FPP*—because it alone is based on the criterion that an elected candidate should be the winner based upon “merit”—i.e. highest overall approval of the entire electorate—reflecting both popularity amongst supporters as well as acceptability to those who prefer another alternative.
- b) ***Principle of majority acceptance.***
Under *1X-FPP* and *MMP*, it is common in multi-candidate contests for a person to be elected without *majority* support. Under *V123*, with second and third-place votes added in, the acceptance of a *majority* of voters would be an almost certain by-product—and in this respect *V123* is clearly superior to *1X-FPP* and *MMP*. However, with a large number of candidates, there is some possibility that an individual might be elected without *majority* support. In any event, the winner under *V123* will always be the candidate with highest overall acceptability to the entire electorate.
- c) ***Principle of representative accountability.***
V123 fully meets the criterion that all elected members should be directly elected by and accountable to their voter constituency.
- d) ***Principle of proportional representation.***
V123 does not address the issue of proportional representation. However, just as *MMP* brings party proportionality to *1X-FPP*, it could equally be applied to *V123*.
- e) ***Principle of political diversity, access and non-exclusion.***
Much better than any of the other alternatives analysed, *V123* would significantly foster diversity of representation and widen both participation and the political debate. While election on the basis of “merit” would ensure that only a candidate with broad approval could gain election, *V123* does indeed establish a level playing field that facilitates rather than excludes the access of small parties and independent candidates. By requiring voters to declare their top three choices, and liberating voters from the “*strategic voting*” and “*wasted vote*” syndromes, *V123* presents unique opportunities for small parties and independent candidates to gain the initial support required to establish their political viability in the minds of voters. Indeed, with such an affirmative “head start” program, it should be possible for the more worthy small parties and independent candidates to be elected on “merit” through the front door—rather than needing to slip in through the back door entrance of *MMP*.
- f) ***Principle of voter protection.***
V123 provides complete voter freedom as well as protection. It effectively eliminates the “*strategic voting*” and “*wasted vote*” syndromes, and fully meets the criterion that, if a voter finds each of the perceived leading candidates to be undesirable but one worse than another, and if their vote becomes the decisive vote, then the “lesser of evils” will be elected.
- g) ***Principle of no unintended consequences.***
V123 liberates voters to express their true preferences—without fear of either unintended or undesirable consequences.
- h) ***Principle of democratic practices.***
V123 fully meets the criterion, to the greatest extent possible, that the voting system should foster democratically constructive behaviour—and discourage adverse practices—by voters, politicians and parties. Voters would indeed be liberated to vote according to their true preferences—with no need to defend themselves by “*strategic voting*” for “the lesser of evils”. Politicians and parties would be rewarded for consensus building and cooperative behaviour, and punished for exploiting divisive tactics, negative campaigning focused upon personalities rather than issues.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE VOTING SYSTEMS:

1. 1X-FPP and comparison with alternatives:

- The essential effect of the *single-X* (1X) ballot, when there are more than two choices, is to severely restrict the ability of voters to express their will as to the comparative acceptability or unacceptability of the different alternatives. If a voter's first-choice is one of the two leading candidates, that voter is not conflicted by the limited expression available under 1X-FPP. However, all other voters face either the "wasted vote" or "strategic vote" problems; if they see either of the two leading candidates as unacceptable, then they are conflicted and need to resort to *strategic voting* to protect themselves. They face the choice of voting with their conscience, or voting for protection—a 'lose-lose' Hobson's choice inflicted by the limitations of the *Single-X* ballot. Another way to look at it is that the *Single-X* ballot doesn't provide any way of expressing a "disapproval" vote—yet it is well recognized that the prime objective of many voters is not actually to vote someone into office as much as trying to prevent some "evil" other from winning. This is an enormous defect—given that election under 1X-FPP is based upon simple *plurality* rather than overall "merit". And as explained, this invites the scurrilous behaviour of divisive strategies that polarize the electorate. If a voting system allowed the expression of both approval and disapproval, then a candidate who polarized the electorate might well receive a net result of zero (or potentially even negative)—which would only be fair and just—but under 1X-FPP such negative behaviour is often a winning strategy. This problem is of course removed in a positive way by V123.
- The essential effect of the "first-past-the-post" (FPP) voting system is to distort the overall result in favour of a party that gains small pluralities—with the major consequence of giving them disproportionate and thus undeserved power, often in the form of *majority* governments—and to the detriment of those parties with highly concentrated voting support, or smaller parties with broadly distributed support.
- The combined effects of these distortions under 1X-FPP is to induce and reward anti-democratic behaviours and strategies on the part of voters, politicians and parties.
- Characteristic defects of *majority* governments—the common and undeserved result of 1X-FPP—are hidden agendas, arrogance, patronage/pork-barrel scandals, domination by the party executive with elected members serving as rubber stamps, etc.
- 1X-FPP exploits the proven political formula that "Fear + Hot-buttons" trump "Truth + Reason". By contrast, "Truth + Reason" should become the norm under V123—since the internal logic of V123 would predictably induce more positive and reduce negative behaviours and strategies on the part of voters, politicians and parties. Voters, by being liberated from the "strategic voting" and the "wasted vote" syndromes, would be free to express their true preferences. Candidates and parties which persisted with the tried-and-true winning strategies under 1X-FPP of pushing voters' Fear and "hot buttons" would find that such divisiveness would likely prove to be a losing strategy under V123—given that alienating large numbers of the electorate would no longer be a way to win.
- Any winner not supported by at least 50% of the entire voting population has only a weak if not unjustified claim to legitimacy, and cannot claim to have a mandate to do anything—this being a standard situation under 1X-FPP. By contrast, winners under V123 would have *majority* support—hence a valid claim to legitimacy and plausible justification to implement the party's platform.
- Another characteristic of 1X-FPP is the political party "duopoly"—where there can be any number of parties, but only two can ever win—and they share power on a semi-permanent basis through a

sequence of “regime rotations” between the “A” team and the “B” team. Under the operative pressures of money and political lobbying, these two teams come to share most of the same patrons, funding sources and economic platforms—as they strive to differentiate themselves on the comparatively unimportant “hot button” issues which are continually served up as public distractions from the real and often hidden agendas. Through these processes—which organically derive from *1X-FPP*, are broadly overlooked by a complicit corporate media; and are essentially unknown to the general public—the “A” team and “B” team morph into virtual clones; the duopoly disguises their joint subjugation of democracy; and the ruling regime of money and corporate influence holds power forever—regardless of who’s running in elections; regardless of the will of the people; and regardless of how the public votes. This result—probably the definitive characteristic of *1X-FPP*—manifests under the camouflage of a superficially democratic process, and effectively ensures the containment of the public and the denial of democracy. This is the political perfection of the old French proverb, “*Plus ça change, plus le meme chose.*” (“*The more things change, the more they stay the same.*”). And the disservice to the public, and virtual futility of public participation in the political process, is well reflected in the increasing public alienation, cynicism, apathy and distrust of politicians and governments.

- As Canadian political experience has shown, the political party “duopoly” can be broken if one of the teams is fatally damaged by an egregiously bad leader. In this case, democracy under *1X-FPP* is degraded into the effective monopoly of a single-party dictatorship—until another party emerges to re-establish another duopoly.
- Despite the enormous deficiencies of *1X-FPP*, it does have its proponents—falling primarily into two groups: those politicians and parties that are the beneficiaries of its distortions and illegitimate results; those voters who favour strong governments rather than democratic equitability and diversity. However, it should be noted that until now, the seriousness of the deficiencies of *1X-FPP* has been considerably under-estimated, and the existence of a superior alternative to *MMP* has not been recognized.

2. *MMP* and comparison with alternatives:

- At its core, *MMP* is a compromise solution. A voting system based on true proportional representation would be a non-starter in a country with the size and regional diversity of Canada, because it would eliminate the traditional bond and direct accountability between a representative of a geographic district and its constituents.
- *MMP* is a complex hybrid system that creates two classes of elected members. Those candidates selected via *MMP* are second class in the sense that they have not personally been legitimized by direct democratic election. But the serious implication of this is that there is no obligation of accountability to any constituency of voters, and each party can pretty much count on a predictable number of “free passes” to parliament.
- The supposition that *MMP* provides a reasonable solution to the problems of *1X-FPP* is based upon false assumptions and serious underestimation of the full extent of its dysfunctionality. Worst of all, it accepts that a *Single-X* ballot provides an adequate and accurate expression of the will of the people—which it most certainly cannot possibly do. By retaining the *Single-X* ballot, *MMP* fails to address the pathological behaviours and strategies which this induces on the part of voters, politicians and parties.
- While the awarding of seats under *MMP* on the basis of aggregate votes to those parties under-represented by *1X-FPP* would eliminate the “wasted vote” syndrome that prevents some people from

voting for the candidate that they actually prefer, it would not eliminate the practice of “*strategic voting*” for the “lesser of evils” as the only action available to defend against the risk of the more evil one being elected.

- Most regrettably, those advocating *MMP* as a remedy to the ills of *1X-FPP* are unwittingly settling for a second rate alternative while serving to prop up an unjustifiable and fundamentally unacceptable voting system.
- Considering the defects of *MMP* and the existence of superior alternatives, one can only wonder why it is so commonly thought of as the only voting reform to be considered. Perhaps it might be “issue fatigue” or “group think” that keeps reformers from looking further and deeper for a better solution. Perhaps it is because most activists are so ardently focused upon their own “hot button” policy issues, rather than thinking about the mechanics of the democratic process, and simply take for granted that *MMP* seems to be the most progressive voting reform. Perhaps it arises from those most disadvantaged by *1X-FPP*—i.e. the smaller parties—and perhaps it is motivated more by desire for reform that would provide them with some direct results. Their case is certainly not without justification; however, it could well be argued that the focus should not primarily be upon a desired solution, but rather on the causal factors of the problem itself. Moreover, there is a distinct possibility that a smaller party with broad appeal, such as the Green Party, might actually be much better and more fairly served under *V123* than *MMP*—given the capacity under *V123* for voters to express their true preferences, and a voting system that determines overall “merit” and public acceptance.
- Despite the fact that *MMP* significantly alleviates some of the deficiencies of *1X-FPP*, it does have its opponents—falling primarily into two groups: those politicians and parties that are the beneficiaries of the distortions of *1X-FPP*; and those voters who prefer strong governments over democratic equitability and diversity. *MMP* leads to minority governments—which are typically less strong, stable and efficient—but more responsive to the people’s needs than the *majority* governments which are characteristic of *1X-FPP*. However, it should be noted that until now, the seriousness of the deficiencies of *1X-FPP* has been considerably under-estimated, and the existence of a superior alternative to *MMP* has not been recognized.

3. *IRV* and comparison with alternatives:

- *IRV* is a defective emulation of the multi-ballot voting system used at political conventions. It is incapable of providing the important opportunities for voters to change their votes as the situation evolves, and lacks the potential for compromise candidates to emerge.
- Because *IRV* functions like *1X-FPP* with the bar raised to a *majority* achieved via the instant runoff voting procedure, it would clearly favour the established major parties—and hence should be the voting reform of choice for those politicians and parties, as well as those voters who favour strong governments rather than democratic equitability and diversity. But those groups are precisely the ones whose interests are already so well served (at the expense of everyone else’s interests) by *1X-FPP*—hence they’ve had little interest in voting reform, and strongly oppose *MMP*. However, it should be noted that until now, the seriousness of the deficiencies of *1X-FPP* has been considerably under-estimated, and the existence of *V123* as a superior alternative to *MMP* and *IRV* has not been recognized.

4. *V123* and comparison with alternatives:

- *V123* is a natural, moderate, non-ideological and non-partisan voting reform that does not suffer from inherent flaws. It is intuitively more fair to voters, politicians and parties alike—and would significantly improve the integrity of the electoral process. It provides voters with more and better options, and should reduce the problems of alienation and apathy. As such, there can be no principled reason to oppose it.
- *V123* is also the appropriate voting system for referenda where there are more than two alternatives. Indeed, it would be only appropriate for many referenda issues to be presented as a range of alternatives, with the goal of producing a consensus position with maximum public acceptance.
- Presuming that political parties would become more interested in choosing leaders and candidates on their ability to unify rather than divide the party and the electorate, *V123* should also become the voting system used at political conventions.
- To illustrate how crucial and potentially decisive a voting system can be, consider the American presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. Under *V123*, the winner of the American election 2000 would clearly have been Al Gore, because he would have received far more second-place votes than GW Bush from the supporters of Ralph Nader. For the same reason, plus GW Bush's record as the exemplar of divisiveness, under *V123* he would stand no chance of winning in 2004. Hence, GW Bush would never have been president under *V123*, and history would undoubtedly have been very different.
- Also, under *V123* the picture would be vastly different for a 'third-party' candidate such as Ralph Nader. Rather than being shunned or harshly criticized by the media and even most progressive voters—with many now questioning Nader's motives and even the merit of his progressive issues oriented campaign, because it might well under *1X-FPP* have the same unintended consequence of electing the perceived greater of evils just as it did in 2000—under *V123* he would almost certainly be a sufficiently strong challenger to be included in the presidential debates. And from this, under *V123*, he might well even finish ahead of GW Bush—primarily as a consensus second-choice to most voters who now remain trapped in the gridlock of partisan thinking—thereby breaking the stranglehold that the Republican-Democrat duopoly has over American political power. Indeed it is even conceivable that a third party candidate like Nader might even win—if sufficient numbers of voters, including some of the citizens who've previously seen no good reason to vote, might choose to support a candidate and party committed to transforming the system into one that served the people's interests ahead of corporate interests. This is not to speculate whether this would happen—just to point out that what may now be unthinkable under *1X-FPP* might actually be possible under *V123*. Nobody today can possibly know what the true political will of the people really is—or how that will might be expressed—until voters are liberated from the strictures of *1X-FPP*.
- In the Canadian election of 2004, the Green Party was ecstatic at increasing its vote to a 4.3% share. But this was insufficient to win any seats in parliament, and the Green Party advocates *MMP* as their solution for voting reform—which they believe would bring them electoral success. However, it is very possible if not probable that a party such as theirs which is dedicated to progressive policies, and does not alienate people with divisive strategies, might well be much more broadly supported under *V123* as a consensus second-choice. Further, any increased strength by such a progressive party would probably have a positive impact in making the platforms of other parties more progressive.
- The concepts of *V123* are adaptable to ranking any number of candidates, and assigning any values deemed appropriate for first, second ... place votes etc. In recommending to rank only three rather than more or perhaps all candidates, the rationale is that this is both simpler and more reasonable for

voters to deal with than requiring them to rank candidates they don't know or care about, and probably quite sufficient to allow adequate expression of their true preference—even if they choose to also cover themselves with *strategic voting*.

- Under *V123*, voters could designate their preferred candidate as first or second-choice, and use one of the other two selections to vote strategically for “the lesser of evils”. This way they are protected by ensuring that the greater evil is defeated if theirs becomes the decisive vote. In any case, voters can express support for at least two of their preferred choices—even if they feel the need to protect themselves with a strategic vote.
- Under *V123*, the range of electable options is dramatically opened up to the smaller parties that are effectively excluded permanently from achieving the potential to become politically significant under *1X-FPP*. Further, while the Green Party seems poised to emerge from the pack and achieve some limited political power under *MMP*, their electoral success might make it even more difficult for other small parties to achieve the required threshold for representation under *MMP*—especially given that this would need to be achieved under the crushing restrictions of a *Single-X* ballot, and given the pressure on progressive voters that a Green vote would not be *wasted* but a vote for another small party probably would be both *wasted* and come at the expense of a non-*wasted* vote for the Greens.
- In the election of members to a parliament or congress, given that each electoral contest is an independent race in each constituency, the results under *V123* would not conform to a goal of proportionality. There are significant counter-arguments to the case for party-proportionality—primarily that this leads to more fragmented parliaments and weaker governments. In this analysis, it is viewed that the numerous and substantial positive improvements of *V123* over *1X-FPP* vastly outweigh the much weaker improvements of *MMP* along with the problems it introduces.
- If party proportionality is deemed to be a necessary criterion, there is no reason that an *MMP* fix could not be similarly applied to the results of voting under *V123*. Under this adjustment, any party that was under-represented by the overall results of *V123* could have additional members added on the basis of proportional representation. This would also be a vast improvement on the results of *MMP* applied to the *1X-FPP* voting system, because of the considerably more accurate expression of the public will, and the considerable improvements in the behavioural characteristics of voters, politicians and parties. Hence, even if it would be decided that party-proportionality is an essential electoral reform, it should not be implemented as *MMP* applied to *1X-FPP*—rather, it should be *MMP* applied to the *V123* voting system.
- The *V123* voting system is a simplified derivative of the *Borda Count* based on rank order voting with differentiated score values. The difference is that true Borda requires all candidates to be ranked, whereas *V123* is limited to the top three positions. While theoretically it might be a more accurate expression of the public will if all candidates would be ranked, practicality requires a reasonable limit on the number of candidates a voter should rank—to avoid voter frustration and confusion, and recognizing that votes for lowly placed candidates of whom the voters have little or no knowledge or interest would actually pollute the intentional expression of the public will.
- The reason why all voters are called upon to cast the same number of votes in preferential voting systems (i.e. all candidates under Borda, three candidates under *V123*) is to ensure equitable scoring and fairness for both voters and candidates. For example, if a voter might choose to select only their preferred candidate with the intent of providing maximum advantage over other candidates, this would be equivalent to a *Single-X* ballot—and if enough voters might use this as a new *strategic voting* practice, *V123* would effectively be degraded to the pathetic *1X-FPP* system that it has been designed to replace, and the integrity of the voting system would be destroyed.

- Beyond the alternative voting systems previously considered, there is another simple alternative referred to as an “Approval Vote” in which a voter may indicate approval for as many candidates as deemed acceptable—but without any rank order. Since all votes are of equal value, this avoids the requirement of preferential voting systems for each voter to select the same number of candidates. While this alternative would also be a vast improvement upon *1X-FPP*, it fails to provide any capacity for voters to register their preferential choices, and hence cannot be the most accurate expression of the true will of the people. Indeed, the inability to indicate preference would likely result in another kind of *strategic voting*.
- As with any possible voting reform, the question of whether *V123* would lead to stable or unstable governments needs to be considered. Indeed, there are voters who are today quite satisfied with *1X-FPP* because they favour strong governments more than democratic equitability and diversity. However, it should be noted that until now, the seriousness of the deficiencies of *1X-FPP* has been considerably under-estimated, and the existence of *V123* a superior alternative to *MMP* has not been recognized. The strength and stability of governments should be stronger under *V123* than *MMP* for two reasons. Firstly, in achieving the principles of political equitability and diversity by providing new and genuine opportunities through the voting system—rather than forcing party proportionality as *MMP* does by giving out “free passes” to supposedly elected offices—*V123* does not fudge the election results to achieve a desired outcome, and ensures that all members must earn their position on the basis of “merit”. Secondly, given the likelihood that the winning political behaviours and strategies would shift away from divisiveness and towards consensus building, partisan politics and polarization—both within the institutions of government and the electorate—should be significantly reduced. As a result, there is good reason to believe that governments under *V123* would be stronger, more effective and responsive than under any alternative voting system.

5. *The “Conway variation”—how 1X-FPP might be transformed into PR:*

The “Conway variation” provides an illuminating view of the problems of both *1X-FPP* and *PR/MMP*. To retain a simple ballot and overcome the need to either increase the size of electoral districts or the number of representatives, Professor John Conway of the University of Regina has suggested a creative modification of *1X-FPP* that would yield proportional representation as a result of the way the votes are tallied.

- The voting results from the simple *1X-FPP* ballots are tallied, and the difference between the leader and all other candidates are calculated.
- These scores for all electoral districts are combined into a single table, which is then sorted in order of best to worst result [i.e. greatest margin of “victory” or narrowest “defeat”] for each party.
- Members are declared elected from the ordered list of best results for each party, according to the proportion of total votes obtained by each party, until a member has been declared elected from each district.

The Conway method has many striking advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side,;

- It achieves the desired result of proportional representation without requiring changes to the ballot, electoral districts or number of seats.
- All members are accountable to their constituency.
- Members elected may arguably be those with greatest merit—based upon the best electoral results from each party.

But probably the most instructive thing about the Conway method is the deep problems it exposes with both *1X-FPP* and *PR/MMP*:

- Under *1X-FPP*, it may be argued that many if not most members are not elected on their own “merit”—rather, they are merely beneficiaries of being the representative of the party whose political brand name is most in favour in that electoral district. Hence, a direct consequence of the *1X-FPP* voting system is the election of many comparatively undeserving members.
- Even those elected under the Conway method may reflect more the concentration, in each electoral district, of voters whose political preferences are most closely aligned with the party or leader image rather than the perceived “merit” of the actual candidates.
- The most difficult to accept aspect of the Conway method, albeit its very essence and fully justified on a theoretical basis, would be the selection of many people as “winners” who numerically were losers—at the direct expense of those bypassed candidates who actually received more votes. Indeed, for the less successful parties which met the *PR* threshold, to make up the quota required for proportional representation, it might involve the selection of third or fourth-place candidates over two or three candidates who actually received more votes!?! The rationalization of this result would probably not be an easy sell with most voters—especially those who voted for candidates who had actually “won” the election only to be declared “losers” because of how the quota system played out.
- But a more or less equivalent practise is indeed also the very essence of *PR*—i.e. selecting unelected people to become office holders, on a quota basis, to rectify the disproportionate results of the *1X-FPP* voting system. And, if it is revealed to be a conspicuously problematic rationalization to do this under the Conway method, is any other form of *PR* fundamentally any better?

REFERENCES:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/library/supstaff/policy%20and%20procedure.htm>

An example of the Borda/V123 voting system:

"The election shall be by *preferential ballot*. Voters will be asked to list the nominees in order of preference. Points will be assigned by the vote-counters, with first-choice receiving 3 points, the second 2 points and the third 1 point, or accordingly in each case with different numbers of nominees. The person receiving the highest total points is the representative, the second highest, the alternate. In the case of a tie, a decision will be made by the drawing of lots."

<http://www.ams.org/new-in-math/cover/voting-decision.html>

Mathematical definition of the Borda Count:

"Given a *preferential ballot* and a candidate on the ballot, assign candidate X a number of points equal to the number of candidates below candidate X on the preference ballot. The *Borda Count* procedure assigns as the winner of an election the candidate with the highest *Borda Count*."

<http://condorcet.org/emr/methods.shtml>

This website contains a comprehensive summary of some 23 different election methods, along with the strategies induced by each, as well as a scholarly set of evaluation criteria.

<http://www.fairvote.org/IRV/robertsrules.htm>

Robert's Rules of Order on Instant Runoff Voting

"Robert's Rules of Order (RRO), the well-known guide to fair procedures, makes the point that an election by a mere *plurality* may produce an unrepresentative result. It recommends voting methods that can determine a *majority* winner when electing single-seat offices. At conventions of private organizations, etc., where the electors can cast repeated ballots, RRO prefers a system that allows open ended repeat balloting with no runoff eliminations to finally elect a *majority* winner. Such a system may be time consuming but can allow a compromise candidate to emerge after a number of ballots. However, in elections where open-ended re-voting is not practical, such as in elections by mail (or governmental elections), instant runoff voting (called "preferential voting" in RRO) is the recommended procedure. In the section detailing the procedure for conducting an instant runoff election RRO states that "It makes possible a more representative result than under a rule that a *plurality* shall elect..... This type of *preferential ballot* is preferable to an election by *plurality*."

"(Again, note that the term "preferential voting" is another one for instant runoff voting)."

<http://www.victoriaunitarian.ca/programs/src/democracy.php>

A concise summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral systems and voting methods in common use throughout the world today, grouped into three main categories:

1. "First Past the Post", or more formally "Single Member *plurality*";
2. Majoritarian system including Single Transferable Vote;
3. Proportional Representation (of which there are many forms, some incorporating features of First Past the Post and Majoritarian systems).

GLOSSARY:

Types of ballots:

"*Single-X*" ballot: The most primitive and restrictive voting record in which the will of a voter can be expressed only via a single "X" beside the name of a selected candidate.

"*Preferential ballot*": A voting record in which the will of a voter can be expressed with numerals 1, 2, 3 ... beside the names of the selected candidates, to indicate the voter's rank order preference as first, second and third-choices respectively.

Major Voting Systems:

"*1X-FPP*": "*single-X, First-Past-the-Post*". A voter casts a vote by marking a single "X" beside the name of the selected candidate on the ballot. The candidate receiving the most votes [i.e. "*plurality*"] is elected.

"*PR*": "*Proportional Representation*". In the pure form of PR, the ballots show the names of the parties only; no candidates are listed and there are no ridings or electoral districts. To restrict fragmentation into an excessive number of parties, some threshold percentage of the popular vote is established, e.g. 5%, to exclude smaller parties. Representatives are chosen by the parties after the election—with the ratio of (s)electd members being proportional to the number of votes for each party.

"*MMP*": "*Mixed Member Proportional*" representation. Under *MMP*, some candidates are elected to represent electoral districts, and some are appointed by the parties ("compensatory members" without districts) so that the proportion of parties in the legislature approximately matches the popular vote. Ballots have two parts: one part allows voters to indicate the party of their choice, and the other part provides an opportunity to vote for the candidate of choice in that district. The selected candidate may be from a different party than the one indicated as the voter's preference. Since only some of the candidates represent electoral districts, the areas have to be increased if the number of representatives is to remain the same, or the number of representatives has to be increased if the districts are to remain the same. The proportion of district representatives to "compensatory members" can vary; Quebec has recently decided that 60-68% of the National Assembly will represent districts (necessitating enlargement of some or all districts) while 32-40% will be used to ensure parties are represented in proportion to their popularity. The system for voting for district candidates can either be by a *single-X* or *preferential ballot*. Compensatory members are elected or appointed by the parties.

"*IRV*": "*Instant Runoff Voting*"—sometimes referred to as "*majority preference voting*" (MPV), or "*alternative vote*" (AV)—is based on a *preferential ballot*. *IRV* emulates the iterative voting procedure used at political conventions—where votes are tallied by totalling the first-place votes for all candidates and, until some candidate achieves a *majority*, eliminating the lowest placed candidate and reallocating those votes to the indicated next choice.

"*V123*": "*Vote 1-2-3*", based upon a *preferential ballot*, is a simplified version of the *Borda Count* voting system, in which election is awarded on the basis of "merit"—as measured by the highest overall acceptability to the entire electorate. Voters rank their top three choices, and the vote count is the sum of points for all first, second and third-place votes [suggested to be tallied as 3, 2 and 1 points respectively].

"*Borda Count*": The Borda voting system was presented in 1770 by Jean-Charles de Borda, as "election by order of merit", in a paper to France's l'Académie Royale des Sciences. Instead of the *IRV* iterative procedure of dropping the lowest candidate and reallocating those votes, the *Borda Count* scores each ballot by awarding points to each candidate reflecting their rank order—i.e. zero points to the lowest ranked candidate, one point to the next lowest ranked candidate, and increasing by one for each level until all candidates have been scored. The winner is simply the candidate with the highest score—i.e. the

winner by order of “merit”—as the candidate with the highest overall acceptability to the entire electorate. Borda recognizes that, when there are more than two choices, the most representative measure of the will of the people cannot be obtained simply by counting the first-place votes alone. Instead, second and third-place votes etc. also need to be counted—but with decreasing value for each lower ranked position, to reflect the level of voter preference for each candidate.

Terminology:

“*Plurality*”: The criterion of awarding an election to the candidate with the most votes—even if that is fewer than 50% of the votes cast. With more than two candidates, this is a common occurrence under voting systems that do not use a *preferential ballot*—e.g. *1X-FPP* and *MMP*.

“*Majority*”: The criterion of awarding an election to a candidate only with greater than 50% of the votes cast. With more than two candidates, this cannot be assured without iterative voting or a *preferential ballot*—e.g. *IRV*. Re *V123*, although there is a small possibility with a large number of candidates that someone might be elected with less than *majority* support, this would be a rare occurrence—unlike *1X-FPP* and *MMP* where it would be the norm. In any case, *V123* guarantees the election of the candidate with the highest acceptance of the entire electorate, which no other voting system can assure.

“*Wasted*” votes: Votes that do not have any impact on the final outcome are commonly referred to as “*wasted*” votes. Under the *plurality* standard of *1X-FPP*, it is common for a *majority* of votes to effectively be *wasted* votes. This contributes to the widespread sense of alienation. The problem is particularly acute for supporters of small parties with little or no chance of winning—whereby those voters know that if they vote their conscience then it will be a *wasted* vote; instead, many choose to vote for a second or third-choice—but only with a sense that the electoral system prevents their true interests from being represented.

“*Strategic voting*”: This is a rather desperate protective measure in which a vote is cast not for the truly preferred party or candidate—but rather for some second or third-choice in the hope of preventing some other candidate from winning. This commonly occurs under *1X-FPP* if the preferred choice would probably become a “*wasted*” vote—and the voter finds one of the major candidates to be so unacceptable that the voter is driven to vote for some other “lesser of evils” in trying to prevent the more evil one from winning. Other voting systems may give rise to other forms of *strategic voting*, which in general should be recognized as an insincere expression of a voter’s will in the hope of achieving some desired electoral outcome. *Strategic voting*, where it is common practice, represents a serious distortion of the true will of the people.