



WHAT'S IN PEI'S ELECTORAL FUTURE FOR WOMEN?

PEI'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS BEHIND THE TIMES.

Through the years, Prince Edward Island has not kept its electoral system up to date. Updates to the electoral system have only come with a push—a push from citizens and commissions to include as voters women, Aboriginal people, and Islanders without property; a push from the courts to make electoral boundaries fair under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The way we vote has not kept pace with our democratic values.

The current electoral system considers geography and population balance when it assesses fairness. It's time to think again about what is "fair" in our political system. It's time to consider gender and diversity.

In the upcoming plebiscite on PEI's electoral future, Prince Edward Island citizens need to vote for change to make our voting system match our values.

Analysis shows: Women will benefit from an electoral system that is more democratic and fair.

PEI'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS BROKEN.

Here's the evidence:

- Chronic under-representation of women.
- Low priority on issues important to women.
- Lack of effective opposition.
- A legislature dominated by two parties.
- A legislature that does not reflect PEI's diversity.
- A legislature that does not reflect the range of Islanders' political perspectives.
- Focus on issues located in districts.
- Regional division on issues that affect all Islanders.
- Cynicism that the political system will ever change.
- A system that only counts votes for district winners.
- Little means to develop consensus on province-wide priorities.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women supports change to a mixed member proportional (MMP) electoral system and encourages Island women to vote "YES" to MMP on NOVEMBER 28, 2005, in the plebiscite on PEI's electoral future.



A MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP) ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR PEI: MORE OF WHAT WOMEN WANT



MMP OFFERS MORE FAIRNESS FOR VOTERS.

Our current electoral system says that as long as representation is distributed fairly by geography and population, that's fair enough.

✓ MMP keeps these values—and adds new ones, such as representing diversity, making sure more votes count in making up government, and ensuring effective opposition.

MMP OFFERS MORE ACCOUNTABILITY.

The current electoral system is good at dealing with issues that affect small districts, but it has no good way to create consensus around Island-wide issues.

✓ MMP has list candidates to address the interests of the whole province. This is especially important for women, since many issues important to women are Island-wide, not focused in just one district.

MMP OFFERS MORE SAY FOR CITIZENS.

Under the current electoral system, only votes for winning candidates count.

✓ Under MMP, more votes count; fewer votes are wasted. There is a balance between the number of votes a party gets at the polls and the number of seats it gets in the legislature.

MMP OFFERS MORE CHOICE FOR VOTERS.

Under the current electoral system, voters sometimes must decide between a party they prefer and a local candidate they prefer. Often, they feel the need to vote strategically.

✓ Under MMP, each voter gets two ballots: one for a district representative and one for a party. More votes count, so voters can express their true preferences.

MMP OFFERS MORE DEMOCRACY.

The current electoral system ensures regions are represented and often results in stable but lopsided governments.

✓ MMP offers regional representation and effective government—and better legislative balance, better representation of parties, better demographic representation, more diversity of ideas, more effective opposition, more value for votes, more regional balance, and more inclusive decisions.

MMP OFFERS MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN.

Under the current electoral system, women have never made up more than 25% of the legislature. Women have a particularly difficult time being nominated.

✓ Under MMP, the rules that guide political party nominations will change, opening up more opportunities to press for women to be nominated and for issues important to women to take priority.