



Letters

Regional Seats and Some Recent Elections

Sir:

A Regional Seats system of election was outlined in a spring 2001 article in this publication. Some recent general elections show the usefulness of the system. In particular, an RS system would provide more diverse party representation in certain areas now dominated by one party or another. One need only consider metropolitan

Toronto-Mississauga to see the truth of this.

In the recent Ontario provincial general election, the Progressive Conservatives won no seats in metro Toronto-Mississauga, which was a repeat of their performance in 2007. Of the 28 seats available, the Liberals took 23 in 2011 and 24 in 2007. The same electoral districts are used federally, and the Liberals took 25 or more of the

seats in the elections of 2004, 2006 and 2008. Only in the most recent federal election was the outcome any different.

Metro Toronto-Mississauga's 28 seats could be grouped into five regions, each region having a Regional Member selected from among the unsuccessful candidates running therein. Provincially, in 2007, the New Democrats were strong in one

Ontario		2011 Election				2007 Election				
Region:	Constituency Seats	Lib	PC	ND	Regional Seat	Lib	PC	ND	Green	Regional Seat
Northwest Ontario	5	3	0	2	PC	4	0	1	0	ND
Northeast Ontario	6	1	2	3	Lib	3	1	2	0	Lib
Ottawa	6	5	1	0	PC	5	1	0	0	PC
Eastern Ontario	6	1	5	0	Lib	2	4	0	0	Lib
Trent	5	2	3	0	Lib	4	1	0	0	PC
Scarborough	6	6	0	0	PC	6	0	0	0	PC
Toronto Harbour	6	1	0	5	Lib	2	0	4	0	Lib
North York	6	6	0	0	PC	6	0	0	0	PC
Etobicoke-York	5	5	0	0	ND	5	0	0	0	PC
Mississauga	5	5	0	0	PC	5	0	0	0	PC
Oshawa-Thornhill	5	1	4	0	Lib	1	4	0	0	Lib
Markham-Simcoe	6	4	2	0	PC	4	2	0	0	PC
Brampton-Oakville	5	3	1	1	PC	4	1	0	0	PC
Kitchener-Guelph	5	2	3	0	Lib	3	2	0	0	PC
Orangeville-Brant	5	1	4	0	Lib	2	3	0	0	Lib
Huron-Simcoe	5	0	5	0	Lib	2	3	0	0	Green
Windsor-Sarnia	5	2	2	1	ND	4	1	0	0	ND
London	5	2	2	1	ND	5	0	0	0	PC
Hamilton	5	1	1	3	Lib	2	1	2	0	Lib
Niagara	5	2	2	1	PC	2	2	1	0	PC
Total (Constituency)	107	53	37	17		71	26	10	0	
Regional MPPs	20	9	8	3		6	11	2	1	
Total	127	62	45	20		77	37	12	1	

region and its Regional Member would have been a Liberal, while the other four would have been Progressive Conservatives. In 2011 there would have been 3 PCs and one ND in Toronto-Mississauga. Federally, the Conservatives would have had four Regional Members in that area in 2008, but due to the collapse of Liberal support in 2011, four of the five would instead have been Liberals.

Metro Toronto-Mississauga is hardly the only example of party dominance. The Prairies, aside from Winnipeg, are equally afflicted. In the last three federal elections the Conservatives took 45 of the 48 seats available each time (which excludes seven Winnipeg area seats). With an RS system there could be nine Regional MPs in the area, and for those elections all obviously would have been from other parties.

In its recent provincial general elections, PEI managed to elect five opposition Members. Prior to the voting, speculation was that one at best would be successful, so popular is the government

of the day. Such has certainly happened before in PEI, and more than once. Islanders would definitely benefit from installing an RS system. The province currently has 27 electoral districts, but it could be readily sectioned into five regions, each with four districts, giving a total of twenty directly elected Members plus five Regional Members in an Assembly of twenty-five. This would assure Islanders of having a minimum of five Members in opposition regardless of how popular some party is at the time.

Ontario uses the same constituencies provincially as federally, which is unusual because provincial electoral districts typically contain fewer electors. Ontario could therefore simply add regional seats to its current assembly. For example, the Table on the following page shows what the addition of twenty Regional MPPs would have done in the last two Ontario elections. Notice that the addition of regional seats would not have changed overall outcomes: in

2011 Ontario would still have had a government just shy of a majority.

Another noteworthy thing is the Green Party winning a regional seat in 2007, which would have given Queen's Park its first Green MPP. Something similar would likely have happened in Alberta's 2008 general elections when Alberta Alliance might well have won a regional seat. Similarly, Preston Manning would have been the first Reform Party MP in Ottawa had an RS system been used in the 1988 general elections.

Some advantages of an RS system are: (1) it assures all small regions have representation from at least two political parties; (2) it assures a functional size of opposition; and (3) it makes it a little easier for a third party to represent a region by getting the regional seat; sometimes a new party may enter a legislative assembly in this way.

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