

A N S W E R S

about our Electoral Future
in Prince Edward Island
Plebiscite - Nov 28

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What is proposed?
Why change?
What are the pros and cons?
Why NOW?
Why should I care?

Listen. Learn. Participate. **Take control.**

Commission on PEI's
Electoral Future
Fair and Simple

Q. Why change?

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A. Change has been a constant since 1773 when eligible voters traveled to Charlottetown to take part in an open vote, the province's first general election. While some believe that the First Past the Post system serves us well, others believe the system could be further improved by adding an element of proportional representation, while maintaining the simplicity of the First Past the Post system for elections at the district level.

Q. Why now?

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A. Electoral reform is catching the attention of Canadians in several provinces as citizens look for ways to make their legislative bodies more closely representative of the popular vote. Prince Edward Island finds itself on the leading edge in this regard.

Q. Who is the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future?

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A. The Commission was appointed in February, 2005 by the Legislative Assembly, in response to recommendations made in 2003 by the PEI Electoral Reform Commission. The Commissioners are:

Leonard Russell, Chair - Graham's Road
Hans Connor, Commissioner - Charlottetown
J'Nan Brown, Commissioner - Clyde River
Arthur Currie, Q.C., Commissioner - Argyle Shore
Blake Doyle, Commissioner - West Royalty
Hon. James Lee, P.C. LL.D., Commissioner - Stanhope
Rob MacLean, Commissioner - Lewes
Yvonne Pitre, Commissioner - Richmond

Q. What is the Commission's mandate?

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A. The Commission was given the mandate to develop and conduct a public education program designed to increase among the general public of Prince Edward Island awareness of the present First Past the Post Electoral system and a Mixed Member Proportional system; and to develop a clear and concise plebiscite question. In addition, the Commission was instructed to make a recommendation on when a plebiscite should be held.

Q. Why should I care?

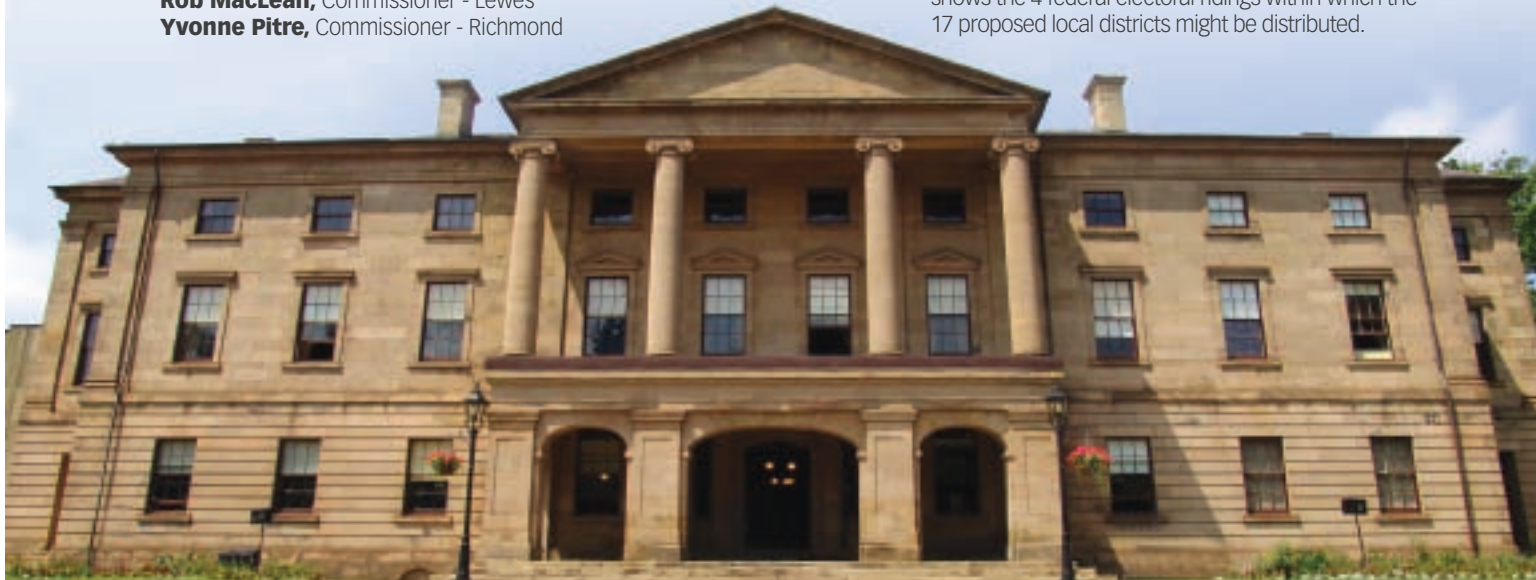
Q. Why should I care?

A. Your voice is carried to government by MLAs. This could be a once in a lifetime opportunity for Islanders to **take control** of how we elect those who represent us in the PEI Legislative Assembly.

Q. What are you being asked to consider?

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A. The Commission has developed, as an alternative for your consideration, a Mixed Member Proportional System, variations of which are already in use in many countries around the world. This system would retain the current Legislative Assembly seat count of 27. Electors would vote in the usual fashion for representatives from 17 newly constituted local districts, and cast another ballot to select the party they prefer, thereby establishing the popular vote. As a result of this popular vote, 10 additional members would be elected on an Island-wide basis from ranked lists provided by the parties. To elect members from these ranked lists, a party would have to gain 5% or more of the popular vote. The map on the inside panel shows the 4 federal electoral ridings within which the 17 proposed local districts might be distributed.



Q. In the proposed system, would I still vote for “my” MLA?

A. Absolutely. As Islanders, we value close relationships with our elected officials. In each of the 17 proposed electoral districts, there would be 5,000 to 5,500 electors (except for the Evangeline region which would have 2,000 to 2,500). We would maintain a better voter/MLA ratio than just about any other Canadian jurisdiction and the close relationship with an MLA, valued by Islanders, would be retained.

Q. What’s wrong with the current system?

A. Some believe the “First Past the Post” or “Winner Take All” system serves us well. Others are concerned when local district MLAs can be determined with as few as 40% of the votes cast and the government can be determined with fewer than 50% of the total votes cast province-wide.

Q. What about the proposed system?

A. Maintains the direct relationship with local MLAs and adds an element of proportionality to the election result. Voters “take control” over local MLA and party representation.

Current “First Past the Post” System

PROS

Ballot and results are easy to use and understand.

Establishes a direct relationship between the voter and the MLA.

Generally leads to majority governments.

CONS

Can lead to artificial majorities that do not reflect the popular vote.

Generally, smaller parties do not win seats, so minority views can be under-represented.

Many votes are seen as “wasted”.

Proposed Mixed Member Proportional System

PROS

Maintains direct relationship with local MLA while adding an element of proportionality.

Voters “take control” over both the election of the local district MLA and the selection of the party.

In the Mixed Member Proportional System, fewer votes are “wasted”.

CONS

Requires the completion of 2 ballots on election day.

More chance of minority governments.

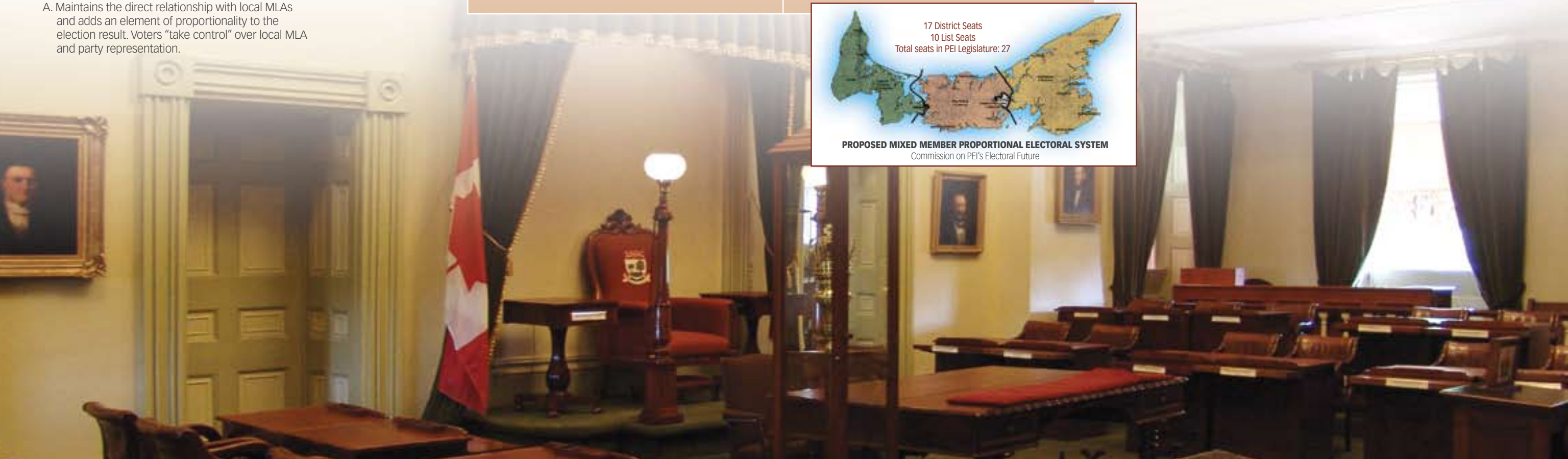
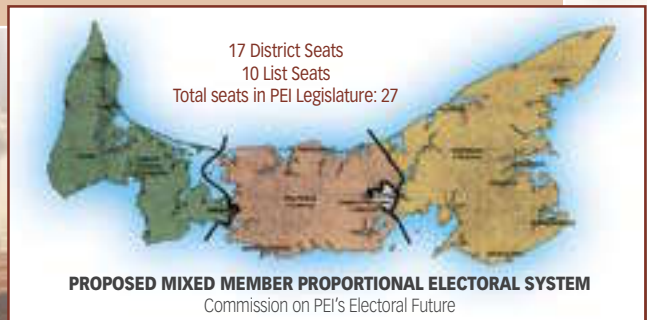
List candidates are seen, by some, as unaccountable.

Q. How would the proposed system elect more women. How could that occur?

A. Increasing the representation of women in the legislature would depend on whether or not political parties were prepared to ensure that women’s names appeared at or near the top of their lists of ten ranked candidates.

Q. Wouldn’t this approach give political parties more power?

A. Clearly, it will be in the interest of the parties to ensure that their candidate lists reflect the make-up of the population of the province. By influencing results for district candidates and also for party representation through the popular vote, electors will have more control, not less.



Q. How do I find out more?

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- A. Go to the Commission's website www.electoralfuture.pe.ca or call **1 866 380-9090**; then attend a public meeting near you. Listen. Learn. Participate. **Take control.**

Bluefield High School	Sept 12, 7pm - 9pm
Westisle Composite High School	Sept 13, 7pm - 9pm
Souris Regional High School	Sept 15, 7pm - 9pm
École Évangéline (To be held in French)	Sept 19, 7pm - 9pm
Kensington Interm. High School	Sept 20, 7pm - 9pm
Colonel Gray Senior High School	Sept 22, 7pm - 9pm
Morell Regional High School	Sept 26, 7pm - 9pm
Kinkora Regional High School	Sept 27, 7pm - 9pm
Carrefour de l'Isle-Saint-Jean (To be held in French)	Sept 29, 7pm - 9pm
Montague Regional High School	Oct 4, 7pm - 9pm
Three Oaks Senior High School	Oct 6, 7pm - 9pm
Charlottetown Rural High School- <i>Wrap Up</i>	Oct 18, 7pm - 9pm

Q. How can I take control?

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- A. **Vote in the plebiscite November 28th.** Watch local newspapers for information on when and where.

Should Prince Edward Island change to the Mixed Member Proportional System as presented by the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future?

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