

# VOTER'S GUIDE

## 2018 REFERENDUM ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Look for your voting package in the mail  
between October 22 and November 2

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## 2018 REFERENDUM ON ELECTORAL REFORM

British Columbia is having a referendum on what voting system we should use for provincial elections. A referendum is a vote on a public issue.

The 2018 referendum is being held by mail from October 22 to December 7, 2018. Registered voters will get a voting package in the mail from Elections BC between October 22 and November 2, 2018.

This guide has information about how to vote in the referendum and neutral information about the voting systems on the ballot. It's a good place to start getting informed before casting your ballot.

We also encourage you to refer to information from all sides in the debate. You can find information from the official opponent and proponent groups at the links below.

<b>Official opponent (campaigning against proportional representation voting systems)</b>	<b>Official proponent (campaigning for proportional representation voting systems)</b>
No BC Proportional Representation Society	Vote PR BC
<a href="https://www.nobcproprep.ca/">https://www.nobcproprep.ca/</a>	<a href="http://voteprbc.ca/">http://voteprbc.ca/</a>



The Attorney General of British Columbia released a recommendations report about the referendum and the voting systems on the ballot in May 2018. The Attorney General's report is available online at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/271/2018/05/How-We-Vote-2018-Electoral-Reform-Referendum-Report-and-Recommendations-of-the-Attorney-General.pdf>

## WHO CAN VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM?

You can vote in the referendum if you are:

- a Canadian citizen
- 18 or older as of November 30, 2018, and
- a resident of B.C. for at least six months immediately before November 30, 2018

## WHAT IS THE REFERENDUM ABOUT?

The referendum will decide what voting system British Columbia uses for provincial elections.

Voters will be asked two questions. The first question asks voters to choose the current First Past the Post voting system or a proportional representation voting system.

The second question asks voters to rank three proportional representation voting systems in order of preference. The three proportional representation voting systems are called Dual Member Proportional (DMP), Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), and Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP).



# THE REFERENDUM BALLOT

This is what your referendum ballot will look like:

Sample

2018 Referendum on Electoral Reform

## Ballot

**Instructions:** To vote, fill in the oval  to the right of your choices, like this:   
Use black pen or marker. Do **not** use pencil.

**Question 1**

Which system should British Columbia use for provincial elections? (Vote for only one.)

The current First Past the Post voting system

A proportional representation voting system

**Question 2**

If British Columbia adopts a proportional representation voting system, which of the following voting systems do you prefer?  
(Rank in order of preference. You may choose to support one, two or all three of the systems.)

	1 <small>1st Choice</small>	2 <small>2nd Choice</small>	3 <small>3rd Choice</small>
Dual Member Proportional (DMP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do I have to answer both questions on the ballot?**

No, you can answer both questions or just one. Your ballot will still be counted if you only answer one question.

**If I support First Past the Post on Question 1, can I still answer Question 2?**

Yes.

**If I answer Question 2, do I have to rank all three systems?**

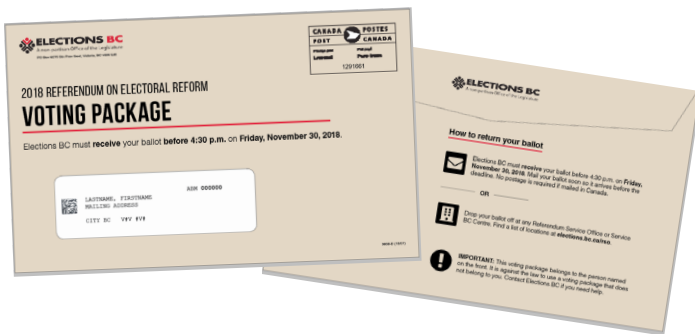
No. You can rank one, two or all three systems.

## HOW TO VOTE

Registered voters will get a voting package in the mail from Elections BC between October 22 and November 2, 2018.

Follow the instructions in your voting package carefully. Elections BC must **receive** your completed voting package by 4:30 p.m. on **December 7, 2018**. Be sure to mail it early enough for Canada Post to deliver it by the deadline. You can also return your voting package in person at any Service BC Centre or Referendum Service Office. Find a list of locations and their hours at [elections.bc.ca/rso](http://elections.bc.ca/rso).

If you need help completing your voting package, contact us or visit [elections.bc.ca/referendum](http://elections.bc.ca/referendum).



Look for this in the mail between October 22 and November 2, 2018

- Your voting package has your name and address on it
- You cannot use someone else's voting package
- You can only vote once

## HOW TO ASK FOR A VOTING PACKAGE

If you don't get a voting package in the mail by November 2, 2018, you can ask for one by:

- Calling Elections BC at 1-800-661-8683
- Visiting [elections.bc.ca/ovr](https://elections.bc.ca/ovr)
- Visiting a Referendum Service Office or Service BC Centre starting November 5 (visit [elections.bc.ca/rso](https://elections.bc.ca/rso) or call Elections BC for a list of locations)

The deadline to request a voting package is November 23, 2018.

## IMPORTANT DATES

**July 1 to  
December 7, 2018**

**Referendum campaign period**  
Referendum advertising is regulated during this period

**October 22 to  
December 7, 2018**

**Voting period**  
Voting packages are distributed and returned

**October 22 to  
November 2, 2018**

Voting packages mailed to registered voters

**November 5, 2018**

Referendum Service Offices open  
(see [elections.bc.ca/rso](http://elections.bc.ca/rso) for details)

**November 3 to  
November 23, 2018**

Voters can ask for a voting package

**Midnight, Friday,  
November 23, 2018**

Deadline to ask for a voting package

**4:30 p.m. (local  
time), Friday,  
December 7, 2018**

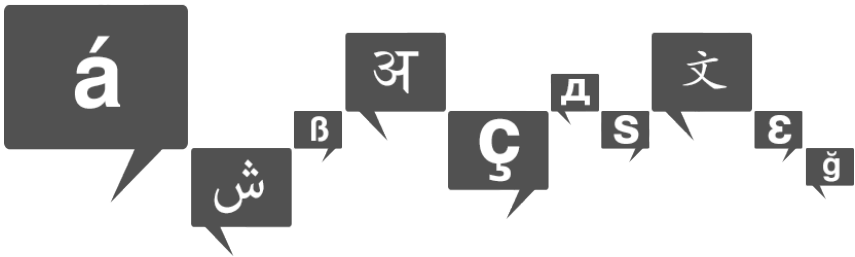
Elections BC must receive your ballot by this deadline



## HOW CAN I GET HELP VOTING?

Call Elections BC at **1-800-661-8683**, or visit a Referendum Service Office or Service BC Centre. You can return your completed ballot package at these locations.

For more information and a list of office locations, visit [elections.bc.ca/rso](https://elections.bc.ca/rso).



## TRANSLATED INFORMATION

This voter's guide is available on the Elections BC website in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese (Simplified – Mandarin), Chinese (Traditional – Cantonese), Filipino (Tagalog), French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian (Farsi), Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

本选民指南的中文（简体）版可在网站[elections.bc.ca/referendum](https://elections.bc.ca/referendum)上浏览

這份選民指南備有中文(繁體—粵語)版本，可見於[elections.bc.ca/referendum](https://elections.bc.ca/referendum)

ਇਹ ਵੋਟਰ ਗਾਈਡ [elections.bc.ca/referendum](https://elections.bc.ca/referendum) 'ਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਰਿ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE REFERENDUM?

The referendum will decide if British Columbia keeps the current First Past the Post voting system or adopts a proportional representation voting system.

If more than half the votes support First Past the Post on the first question, the voting system for provincial elections will stay the same.

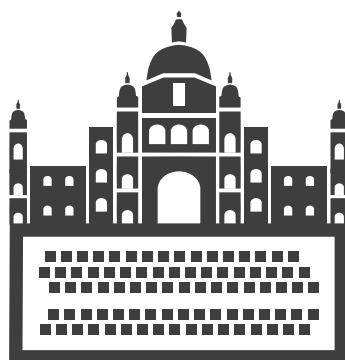
If more than half the votes support proportional representation on the first question, the proportional system with the most support on the second question will be adopted.

If a proportional voting system is adopted it must be in place for provincial elections called on or after July 1, 2021. A provincial election called before this date would use First Past the Post.

If a proportional representation voting system is adopted, the government has said that after the referendum:

- a legislative committee will determine how some aspects of the new system will work
- an independent electoral boundaries commission will determine the number and boundaries of the electoral districts and regions represented in the legislature
- the total number of MLAs in the legislature will be between 87 and 95 (currently there are 87)
- no region in the province will have fewer MLAs than it does now
- another referendum will be held after two general elections to see if B.C. wants to keep the new voting system or go back to using First Past the Post

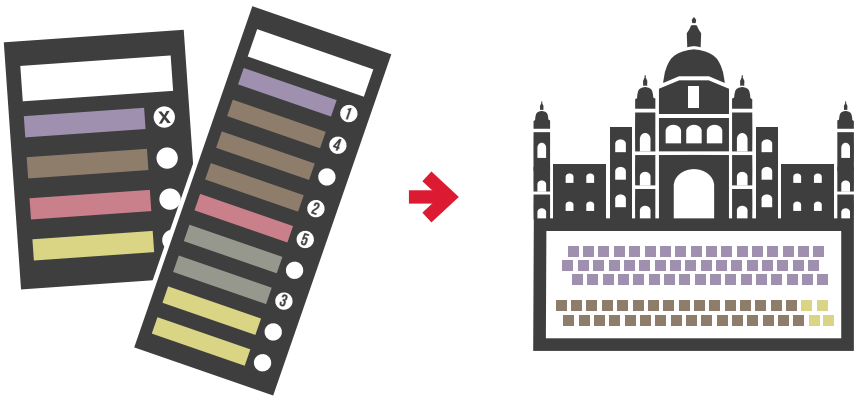
For more information about the decisions that will be made after the referendum if a new system is adopted, visit [elections.bc.ca/referendum](https://elections.bc.ca/referendum).



## WHAT IS A VOTING SYSTEM?

A voting system is how we elect representatives to a legislature. In provincial elections, the voting system elects Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The Legislative Assembly is where provincial laws are made and governments are formed.

There are many different voting systems. Each one has different rules about how voters cast their ballot, how votes are counted, and how votes translate into seats in the legislature.



## VOTING SYSTEMS TERMS USED

Member of the Legislative Assembly – MLA

Member – short form of MLA

First Past the Post – FPTP

Dual Member Proportional – DMP

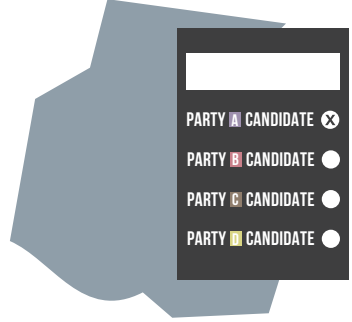
Mixed Member Proportional – MMP

Rural-Urban Proportional – RUP



# WHAT IS THE FIRST PAST THE POST VOTING SYSTEM?

First Past the Post (FPTP) is British Columbia's current voting system. In FPTP the province is divided into electoral districts and each district is represented by one Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Voters mark their ballot for one candidate. The candidate with the most votes in the district wins and represents the district in the legislature.



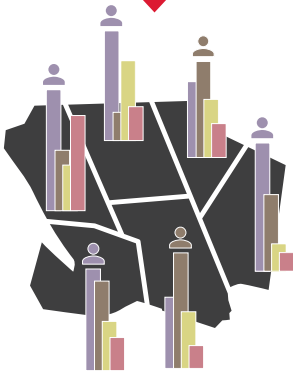
The number of seats a party gets in the legislature equals the number of districts its candidates win. This system tends to elect candidates from large parties and result in single-party majority governments. FPTP is used in a number of countries at the national or sub-national level, including Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF FIRST PAST THE POST

<b>Voting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voters vote for one candidate on the ballot</li></ul>
<b>Counting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The candidate with the most votes in the district wins and represents the district in the legislature.</li></ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The number of seats a party wins in the legislature equals the number of districts the party's candidates win in the province</li></ul>
<b>Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 87 MLAs in the province</li><li>• British Columbians have one MLA that represents their district</li></ul>
<b>Electoral districts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same size as currently</li></ul>



*In FPTP, voters vote for one candidate.*



*The candidate with the most votes in each district wins.*



*The number of seats a party wins in the legislature matches the number of districts they win in the province.*

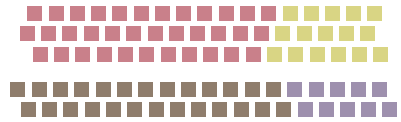
For more information about FPTP, including a short video on how the system works, visit [elections.bc.ca/fptp](https://elections.bc.ca/fptp).

## WHAT IS PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

Proportional representation is when the share of seats a political party wins in the Legislative Assembly is about the same as the party's share of the popular vote. So, if a party receives 40 percent of the popular vote, they are likely to have about 40 percent of the seats in the legislature. There are many different voting systems that are designed to produce proportional results.



*Each party's share of the vote*



*Seats in the legislature*

## WHAT PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION VOTING SYSTEMS ARE ON THE REFERENDUM BALLOT?

Dual Member Proportional (DMP), Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), and Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP) are the proportional voting systems on the referendum ballot. These systems elect legislatures where a party's share of seats is close to its share of the vote.

Characteristics of proportional voting systems

- Results are largely proportional at the provincial level
- Voters normally elect and are represented by more than one MLA in their electoral district or region
- Districts are usually larger than in First Past the Post
- Candidates are elected in different ways depending on the voting system (see the descriptions of each system in this guide)
- Smaller parties are more likely to be represented in the legislature than in First Past the Post, so the legislature is likely to have more parties
- Coalitions or agreements between parties are usually needed before a government can be formed

# FIRST PAST THE POST AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION VOTING SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

Whether you prefer First Past the Post or a proportional system depends on what's important to you. No voting system is perfect – otherwise everyone would use the same system! Every voting system requires trade-offs between competing priorities.

This guide will help you understand the characteristics of First Past the Post and the proposed proportional systems, but the decision about which system is best is up to you. Get information from all sides in the debate to help make your decision.

	<b>First Past the Post</b>	<b>Proportional representation systems</b>
<b>Representation</b>	Each electoral district has one MLA.	Voters normally elect and are represented by more than one MLA in their district or region
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of seats a party gets in the legislature equals the number of districts its candidates win</li> <li>• Tends to elect candidates from large parties and result in single-party majority governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A party's share of seats in the legislature roughly matches its share of the province-wide popular vote</li> <li>• Tends to elect candidates from large and small parties and result in multi-party or coalition governments</li> </ul>
<b>Electoral district size</b>	Districts are smaller than in proportional systems	Districts are larger than in First Past the Post
<b>Number of MLAs</b>	Same as currently (87)	Between 87 and 95

# DUAL MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (DMP)

In Dual Member Proportional (DMP), most electoral districts are combined with a neighbouring district and represented by two Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The largest rural districts continue to have one MLA elected by getting the most votes. The total number of MLAs stays about the same.

In two-MLA districts, parties can have one or two candidates on the ballot. Parties decide which of their candidates is listed first on the ballot and which is listed second. Voters vote for a candidate or pair of candidates by marking the ballot once.

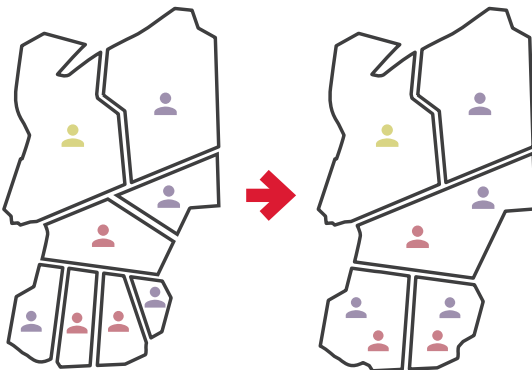
The first seat in a district is won by the candidate with the most votes. This seat is filled by the candidate the party listed first on the ballot.

Second seats go to parties so that each party's share of seats in the legislature roughly matches its share of the province-wide popular vote. A party's second seats are filled in districts where its candidates did particularly well. Parties need at least five percent of the vote to get any second seats.

DMP was recently developed in Canada and is not currently in use.



*Voters select one option on the ballot. Parties run up to two candidates.*



*Most existing districts are combined with a neighbour. Each new, larger district elects two MLAs instead of one.*



## CHARACTERISTICS OF DUAL MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (DMP)

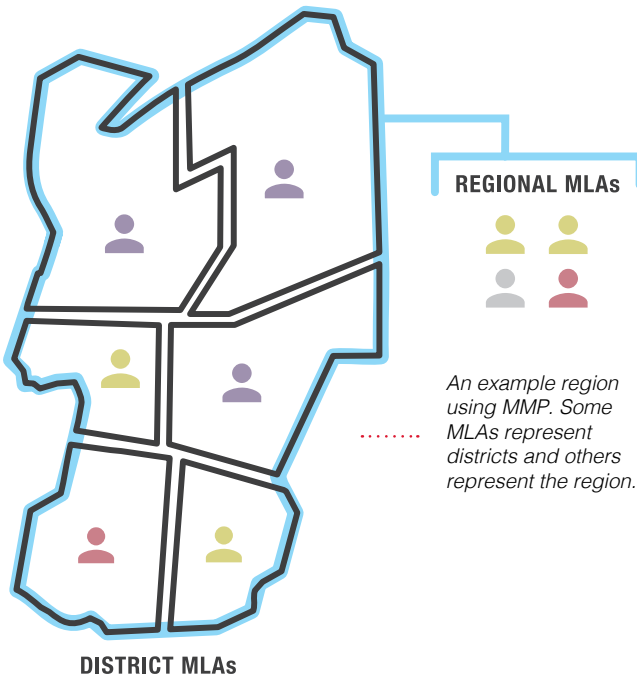
<b>Voting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parties nominate one or two candidates per district</li><li>• Parties specify their first and second candidates on the ballot</li><li>• Voters vote for one option on the ballot – a party's candidate(s) or an independent candidate</li></ul>
<b>Counting</b>	<p><b>Urban and Semi-Urban Districts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first candidate of the party with the most votes in the district wins the first seat</li><li>• The second seat is won by a party based on its share of the popular vote province-wide and its performance in each district</li><li>• Independent candidates win a seat if they place first or second in the district</li><li>• A party must get at least 5 percent of the vote province-wide to get any second seats</li></ul> <p><b>Large Rural Districts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The candidate with the most votes wins</li></ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results are proportional at the provincial level</li><li>• The candidate in second place may not win the second seat, because second seats are allocated to parties to get a proportional outcome</li></ul>
<b>Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Between 87 and 95 MLAs</li><li>• British Columbians in urban and semi-urban areas have two MLAs representing their district</li><li>• British Columbians in large rural areas have one MLA representing their district</li></ul>
<b>Electoral districts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urban and semi-urban districts are combined with a neighbouring district</li><li>• Boundaries of the largest rural districts stay the same</li><li>• If DMP is adopted, an independent electoral boundaries commission will decide which districts will stay the same and which will be combined after the referendum</li></ul>

For more information about DMP, including a short video on how the system works, visit [elections.bc.ca/dmp](https://elections.bc.ca/dmp).

## MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP)

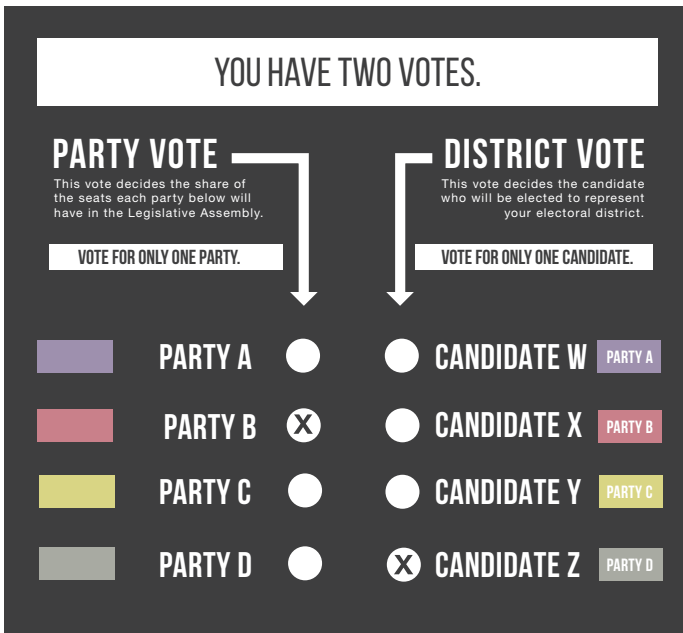
In Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) there are two types of MLAs. District MLAs represent electoral districts and are elected using First Past the Post. Regional MLAs represent groups of electoral districts called regions. They are elected from a party list so that each party's share of seats in the legislature roughly matches its share of the province-wide popular vote.

Regional seats are allocated to parties within defined regions, not the province as a whole. District seats and regional seats – added together – roughly match the party's share of the vote. A party must get at least five per cent of the vote to get any regional seats.



In some forms of MMP, voters have two separate votes: one for a district candidate and one for a party. In other forms, voters cast one vote for a candidate that also counts for the candidate's party. If MMP is adopted, a legislative committee will decide after the referendum if voters have one vote or two.

MMP is used in a number of countries at the national or sub-national level, including Germany, New Zealand and Scotland.



*A sample MMP ballot assuming a two-vote model and a closed party list*

# CHARACTERISTICS OF MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP)

## Voting

- There are two possibilities:
  - Voters have two votes – one for a candidate and one for a party
  - Voters have one vote and vote for a candidate. This vote counts for the candidate and the candidate’s party.
- In both cases, regional members are elected from a list of candidates prepared by the party. There are three possible types of party list:
  - Closed list – voters vote for a party’s list of candidates
  - Open list – voters vote for an individual candidate on the party’s list
  - Open list with party option – voters vote for a candidate or endorse a party’s list of candidates
- If MMP is adopted, a legislative committee will decide after the referendum whether voters have one vote or two and what type of party list is used

## Counting

- The total number of seats a party gets is based on its share of the popular vote province-wide
- The candidate with the most votes in the district wins the district seat
- District seats are “topped-up” by regional seats so that the total number of seats a party gets roughly matches its share of the popular vote province-wide
- A party must get at least five per cent of the vote to get any regional seats.

## Results

- Results are largely proportional at the provincial level
- Regional seats are allocated within defined regions

# CHARACTERISTICS OF MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP) CONTINUED...

## Representation

- Between 87 and 95 MLAs
- British Columbians have one MLA representing their electoral district and several MLAs representing their region
- If MMP is adopted, at least 60 percent of MLAs would be district MLAs, but the exact ratio of district MLAs to regional MLAs would be decided by a legislative committee after the referendum

## Electoral districts

- Electoral districts are larger than they are now and there are fewer of them
- If MMP is adopted, a legislative committee will determine the number of MLAs in each region after the referendum
- If MMP is adopted, an independent electoral boundaries commission will determine district and regional boundaries

For more information about MMP, including a short video on how the system works, visit [elections.bc.ca/mmp](http://elections.bc.ca/mmp).

# RURAL-URBAN PROPORTIONAL (RUP)

Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP) combines two different proportional voting systems: Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP).

Voters in urban and semi-urban districts use STV to elect multiple MLAs for their larger electoral district. Parties can run multiple candidates in a district and voters rank their preferred candidates on the ballot (1, 2, 3, etc.). Voters can rank as many candidates as they wish.

See the Counting section in the table for how candidates are elected in urban and semi-urban districts.

In rural districts voters use MMP to elect district and regional MLAs (see the MMP section).

Overall provincial results are likely to be generally proportional.

RUP is not used anywhere as a single system, though MMP and STV are used in several countries at the national or sub-national level. MMP is used in Germany, New Zealand, and Scotland. STV is used in Ireland, Australia and Malta.

For more information about RUP, including a short video on how the system works, visit [elections.bc.ca/rup](https://elections.bc.ca/rup).



# CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL-URBAN PROPORTIONAL (RUP)

<p><b>Voting</b></p>	<p><b>Urban and Semi-Urban Districts (STV)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voters rank candidates in order of preference (1, 2, 3...)</li> <li>• Voters can rank as many candidates as they wish</li> <li>• Parties can run multiple candidates in a district (up to the number of seats in the district)</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural Districts</b> – see MMP section</p>
<p><b>Counting</b></p>	<p><b>Urban and Semi-Urban Districts (STV)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several rounds of counting are usually required</li> <li>• Each district has a minimum number of votes needed to win one seat in the district. This number is called the quota.</li> <li>• Any candidate who reaches the quota is elected</li> <li>• If an elected candidate has more votes than the quota, their extra votes are transferred to other candidates using the voter's next choice</li> <li>• Candidates with the fewest votes are dropped and their votes are transferred to other candidates using the voter's next choice</li> <li>• Counting continues in this way until all seats in the district are filled</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural Districts</b> – see MMP section</p>
<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall provincial results are likely to be generally proportional</li> </ul>
<p><b>Representation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 87 and 95 MLAs</li> <li>• British Columbians in urban and semi-urban areas have multiple MLAs representing their larger electoral district</li> <li>• British Columbians in rural areas have one MLA representing their electoral district and other MLAs representing their region</li> </ul>
<p><b>Electoral districts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral districts are larger than they are now and there are fewer of them</li> <li>• If RUP is adopted, an independent commission will determine the boundaries of the MMP districts, the MMP regions, and the STV districts</li> </ul>

# QUESTIONS?

Visit our website or contact us for more information about how to vote in the referendum and the voting systems on the ballot.

**[elections.bc.ca/referendum](https://elections.bc.ca/referendum) | 1-800-661-8683**



**ELECTIONS BC**  
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature