

Dual Member Proportional: An Option for Yukon

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What is Dual Member Proportional?

Dual Member Proportional (DMP) is a proportional voting system in which two local candidates are elected in every constituency. The first is elected by First Past the Post. The second is elected in a way that ensures a proportional election outcome across the territory.

Where does DMP come from?

DMP was invented in Canada, for Canadian jurisdictions. It was developed with funding from the University of Alberta, and has appeared on public votes in Prince Edward Island and British Columbia.

What problem does DMP solve?

DMP provides a relatively easy way for Canadian jurisdictions to take the step forward from non-proportional to proportional voting.

Like all proportional voting systems, DMP is based on the principle that a Legislative Assembly should reflect the views of the people in direct proportion to their numbers.

What sets DMP apart is that it maintains two of the most widely appreciated features of the current system. First, it maintains the simple “mark one X” voting experience that is familiar to Yukoners and all Canadians. Second, it keeps every representative local. With DMP, all of Yukon’s MLAs would serve the local constituency where they ran as local candidates.

How do Canadians respond to DMP?

By maintaining a single-vote ballot and 100% local MLAs, DMP is intended to broaden public support for proportional representation. Compared with other proportional voting systems, DMP tends to appeal to Canadians who are skeptical or uncertain about change.

- In the 2016 PEI Plebiscite, more Islanders ranked DMP above First Past the Post than the other way around. DMP also received more than twice as many 1st choice votes as Preferential Voting (ranked ballots in single-member constituencies). Finally, DMP received the most 2nd choice votes of all five systems in the plebiscite, suggesting it could be a consensus option.
- In the 2018 BC Referendum, DMP was the most popular of the three proportional voting systems among people who voted against change. It was also the clear favourite among British Columbians who chose not to answer the question of whether the system should change, but still ranked the alternative systems.

Is there any voting system like DMP in use?

Yes. The German state of Baden-Württemberg has used a system like DMP for roughly 70 years.

- All candidates in Baden-Württemberg run in a local constituency, just like DMP.
- Voters in Baden-Württemberg mark a single-vote ballot, just like DMP.
- The First Past the Post winner is elected in every constituency, just like DMP.
- The remaining local candidates are elected in a way that accounts for their local popularity, yet ensures a proportional outcome overall, just like DMP.

The difference is that in Baden-Württemberg, each constituency may end up sending 1, 2, 3, or 4 of its local candidates to the Assembly. The number of candidates elected from each constituency depends on how people vote, and varies from election to election. DMP improves on this existing system by ensuring that exactly two candidates are elected from every dual-member constituency.

What would DMP look like in Yukon?

The following is one concrete way DMP could be implemented for Yukon territorial elections.

- Both Whitehorse and Rural Yukon would gain 1 additional seat. This would increase the size of the Assembly from 19 seats to 21 seats.
- The current 11 constituencies in Whitehorse would become 6 dual-member constituencies.
- The current 8 constituencies in Rural Yukon would become 4 dual-member constituencies plus Vuntut Gwitchin, which would remain a single-member constituency.
- All voters, including those in Vuntut Gwitchin, would contribute equally to the territory-wide popular vote. The popular vote would determine the total number of seats for each party.

How proportional is DMP?

DMP is a highly proportional voting system. It would allow Yukoners everywhere to vote effectively for their preferred option, and have their views represented in the Legislative Assembly.

Other proportional voting systems, like Mixed Member Proportional and the Single Transferable Vote, would require the territory to be divided into regions to ensure a sufficient number of MLAs in rural areas. Elections would then be proportional only within each region. Because Rural Yukon has fewer seats than Whitehorse, these systems would offer a lower degree of proportionality in rural areas.

With DMP, voters in Rural Yukon would enjoy the same degree of proportionality as voters in Whitehorse. If implemented as outlined above, DMP would also increase the proportion of seats dedicated to rural areas. An increase in geographical representation for Rural Yukon would be easier to justify with DMP than with other voting systems, since DMP uses territory-wide proportionality to satisfy the principle that all voters are equal. All voters would have equal political representation, but rural voters would be overrepresented geographically as is the tradition in Yukon and Canada.

More information on DMP can be found at <https://dmpforcanada.com/>.