

The Electoral Imbalance

- ▣ How our representative democracy works.
- ▣ Consequences of Quebec's system.
- ▣ Comments on electoral changes.
- ▣ Suggestions, proposals.

How Our Representative Democracy Works:

Geography: Representation through ridings (125, 1 Rep. each)

Quebec is 1.66 million sq. kms (bigger than France (0.54), Japan (0.37), Germany (0.349), and UK (0.24) combined). Rural ridings enormous.

More than 50% of the pop. lives now in Greater Montreal, but pre-WW1 rural strength lingers in our electoral ridings.

The urban-rural split is a growing problem as is suburbanization around Montreal. Population moves faster than the riding boundaries.

The winners of the ridings are those “first past the post”. That means they have the *largest* number of votes not always a majority of votes .

How Our Representative Democracy Works

- The party with the most *seats* not the party with most *votes* controls the Legislature. The rise of a Third Party is important.
- Voting not compulsory: the *percentage of the electorate who vote is dropping* in Quebec and elsewhere. The Third Party does not mean extra votes.
- What does all this mean in practical terms?

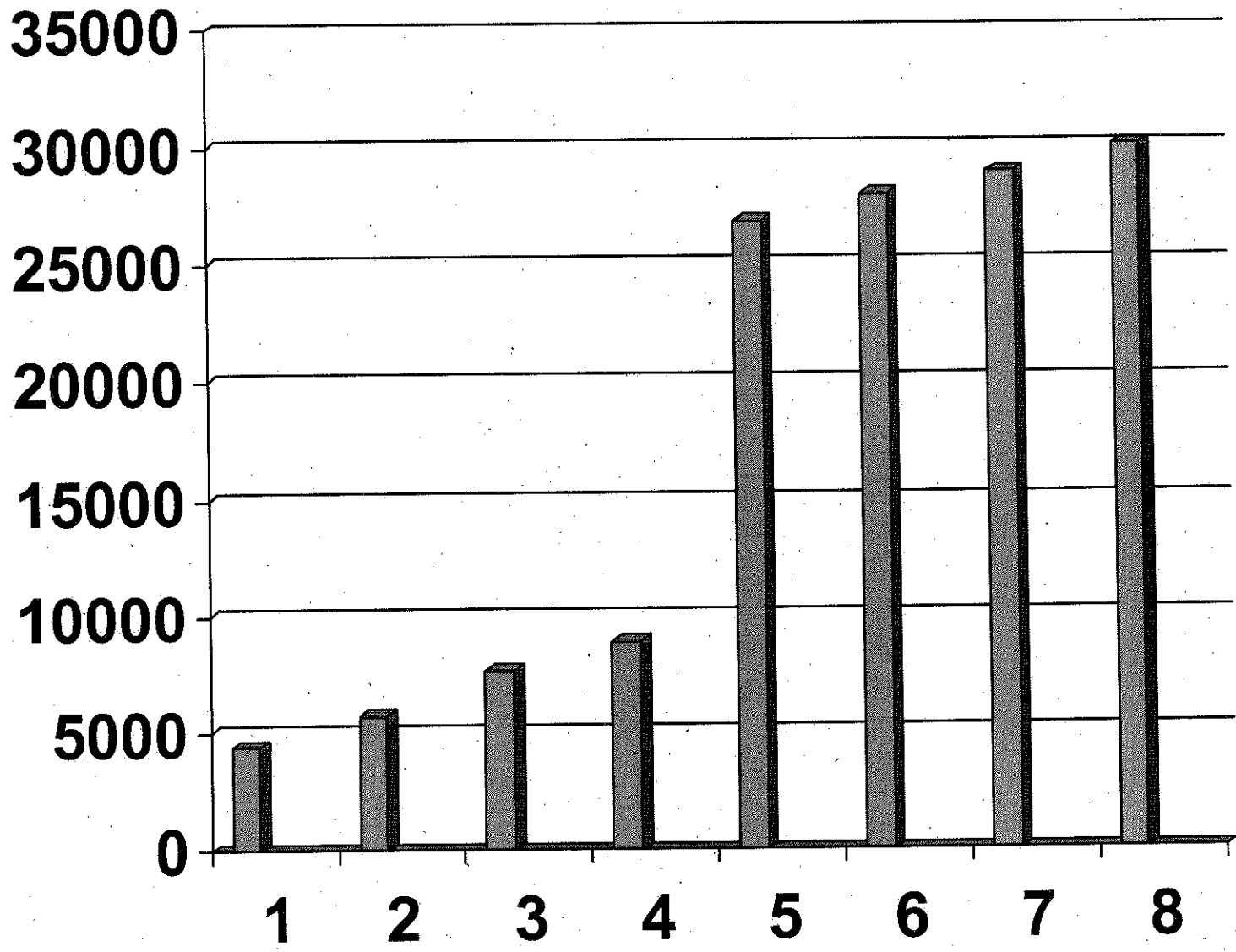
Consequences of Quebec's System

The 125 ridings are of different *demographic/* geographic size and reflect our rural past not suburban Montreal present.

The number of votes needed to *win* each riding varies by riding (“first past the posts”) but is *dropping* because of the Third Party dividing up an already decreasing number of votes.

Quebec's average of approximately 45,000 voters per riding hides more than it reveals about demographic imbalances.

“First Past The Posts” Large/Small Ridings 2003

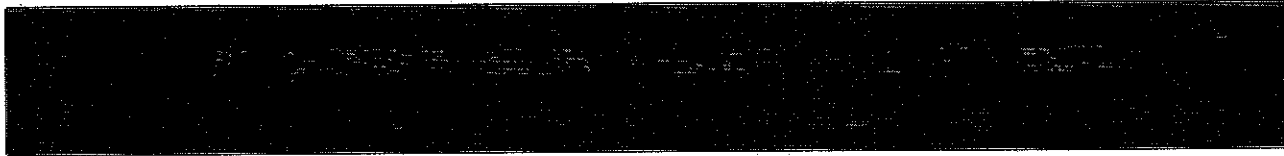
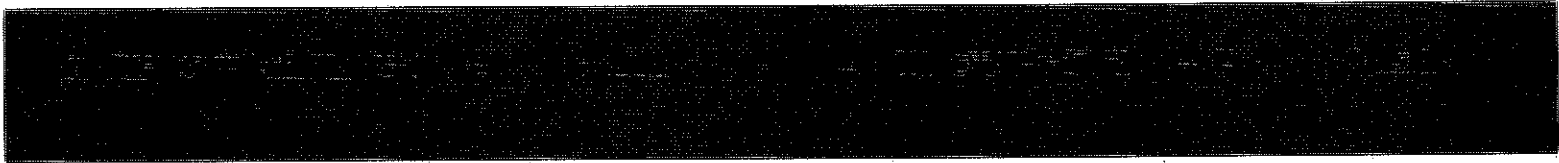


Consequences of Quebec's System

Election 2003: Impact on Parties

Average District Size 45,000

Some Parties have to run fewer voters Past the Electoral posts than others.



Percent of the Vote does not reflect % of seats in National Assembly.

Usually more people vote *against* than for the government.

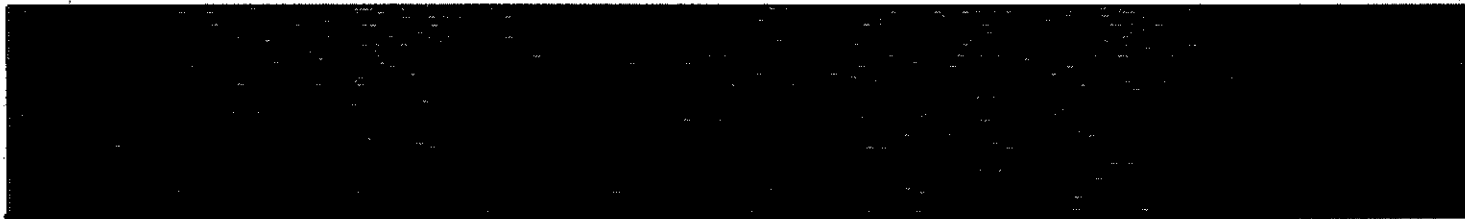
Government	% of Vote	% of NA Seats
1976 (PQ)	41.4	64.5
1981 (PQ)	49.3	65
1989 (LIB)	49.9	73.6
1994 (PQ)	44.8	61
1998 (PQ)	42.9	60.8
2003 (LIB)	45.9	60.8
2007 (LIB)	33%	37.6

Only the Liberal government of 1985 won a clear majority of the popular vote. We usually have minority governments in terms of representing the votes cast.

Quebec's electoral system is not demographically symmetrical.

It Takes 45% Of The Electorate

It Takes 56% of The Electorate



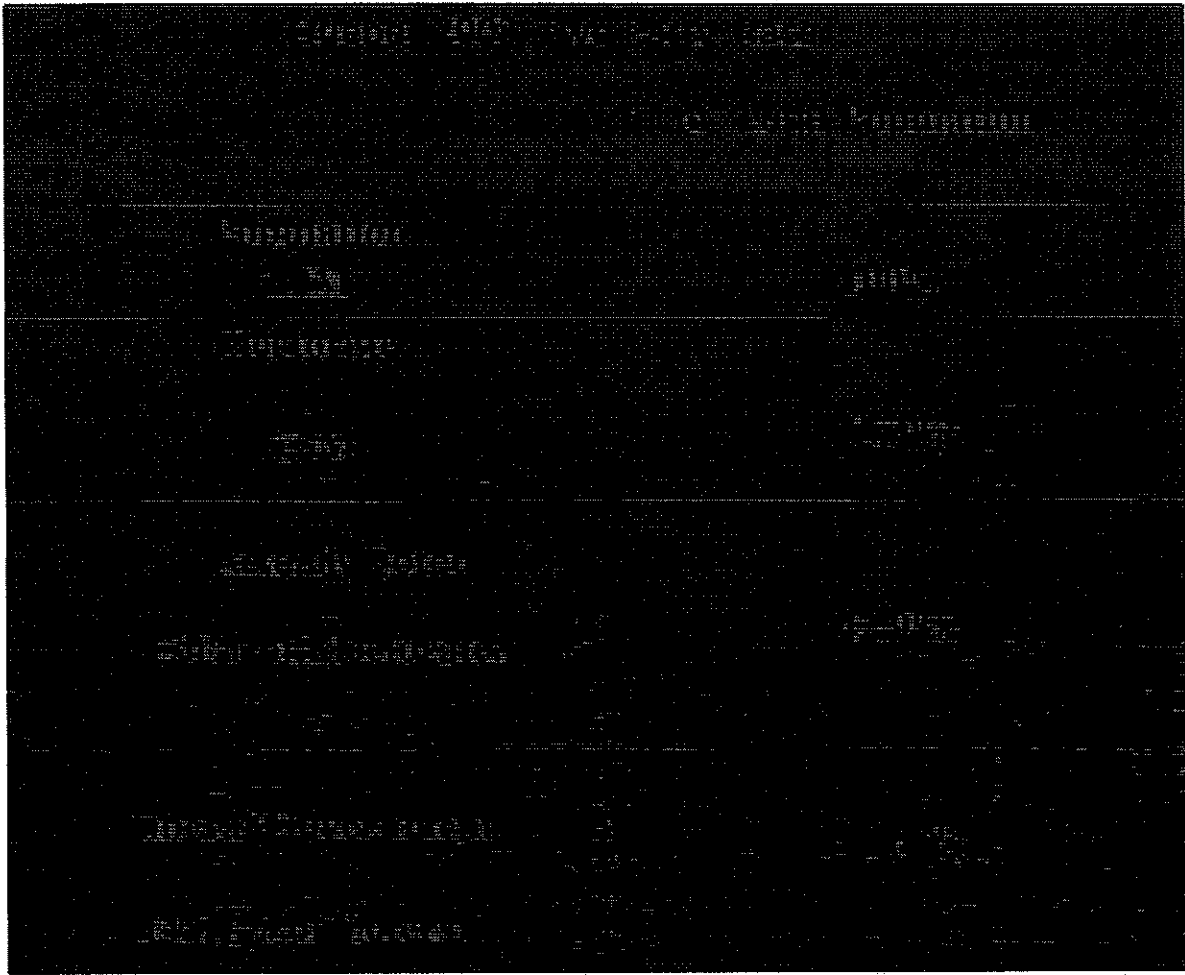
The PQ received *less* of the popular vote but won the election in 1998.
Quebec's electoral imbalance creates demographic "minority" governments.

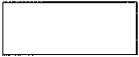
It probably discourages voter participation. The majority of voters fail to elect their chosen government.

Quebec 2007 (Three Party Race)

% of Total Population

Population 7.7 M	100%
Electorate 5.6 M	71%
Actually Voted (all parties) 3.9	51%
Voted for Liberal Government. 1.3 M (33% of vote, 23% of electorate)	





United States Presidential Election	
Population (300 million)	100%
Electorate	NA
Actually Voted	
122 Million, Year 2000	40%
121 Million, Year 2004	40%
Voted for President Bush: 50.5 Million, Year 2000 (Rec'd fewer votes than Gore)	16.8%
62 Million, Year 2004	20.6%

Comment on CRE's Proposed Electoral District's Changes

Comments based on US Supreme Court decision of 1962;

The difference in voters between the largest and the smallest state electoral district can be no more than 10%

Quebec's Electoral Average is approximately 45,000

Applying US acceptable limits is 42, 750 to 47,250.

Applying this approximately not rigidly is:

Que. Ridings Illegal According To US Voting Limits	Que. Ridings Within US Limits	Que. Ridings Illegal According To US Voting Limits
33 (26.4%)	46 (36.8%)	46 (36.8%)
Below 42,250 Voters	42,250-47,500 Voters	Above 47,500

Suggestions, Proposals

- To overcome distance problems, rural ridings should have electronic connections (video cams) to be in touch with MNA's, hold election meetings (Distance Electioneering)
- CRE/ Elections Quebec website is excellent, but spoiled by some "Quebec nationalist" perspectives (website should include loss of right to Anglophone protected ridings, Papineau's disenfranchising of women).
- The Native People, not Ungava/Magdalene Islands should have two small undersized ridings, the rest subject to US electoral standards so Quebec has representation by population
- Montreal ridings, especially the large West Island ridings should be slightly below not remarkably above the Quebec riding average

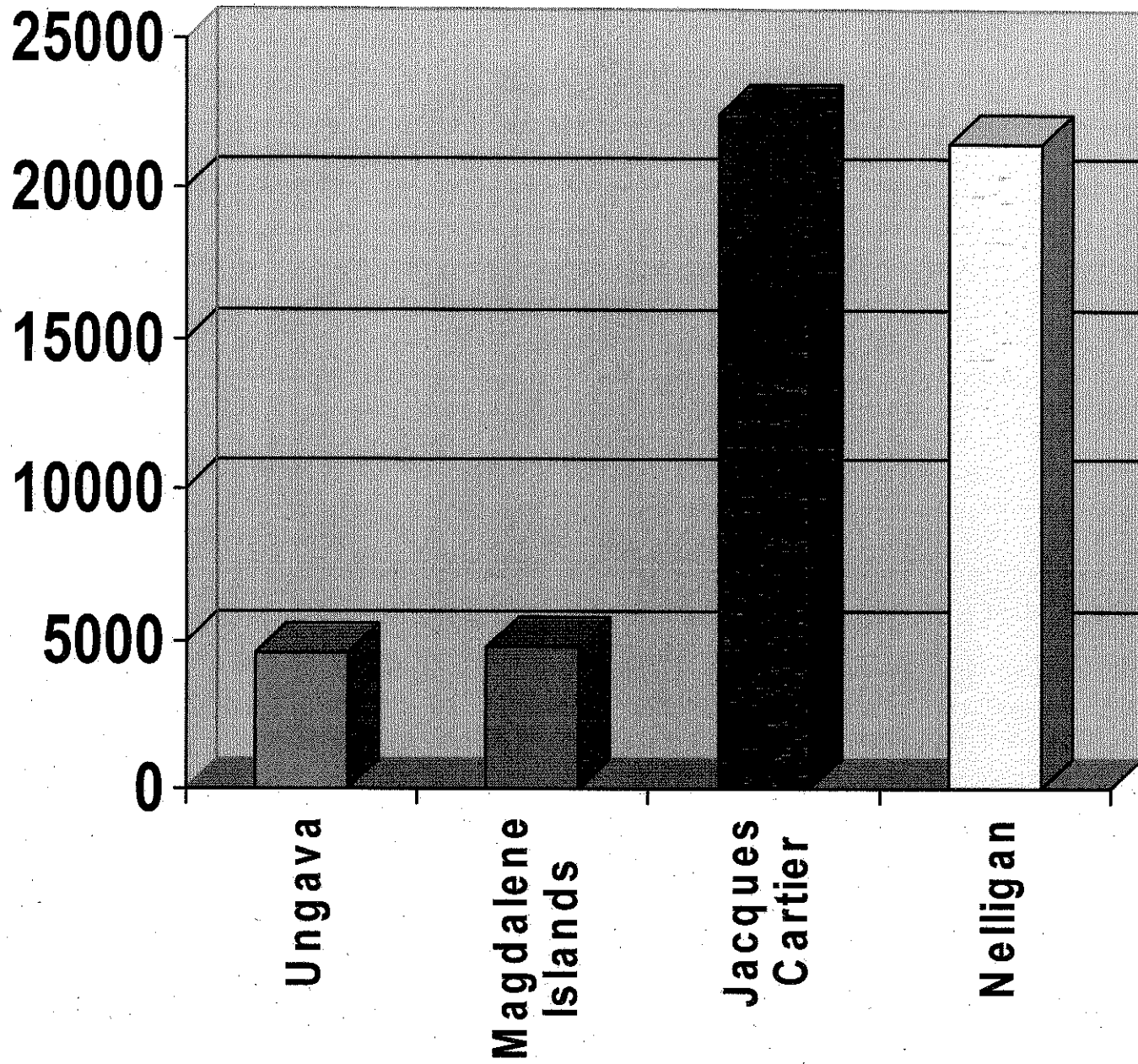
Conclusion

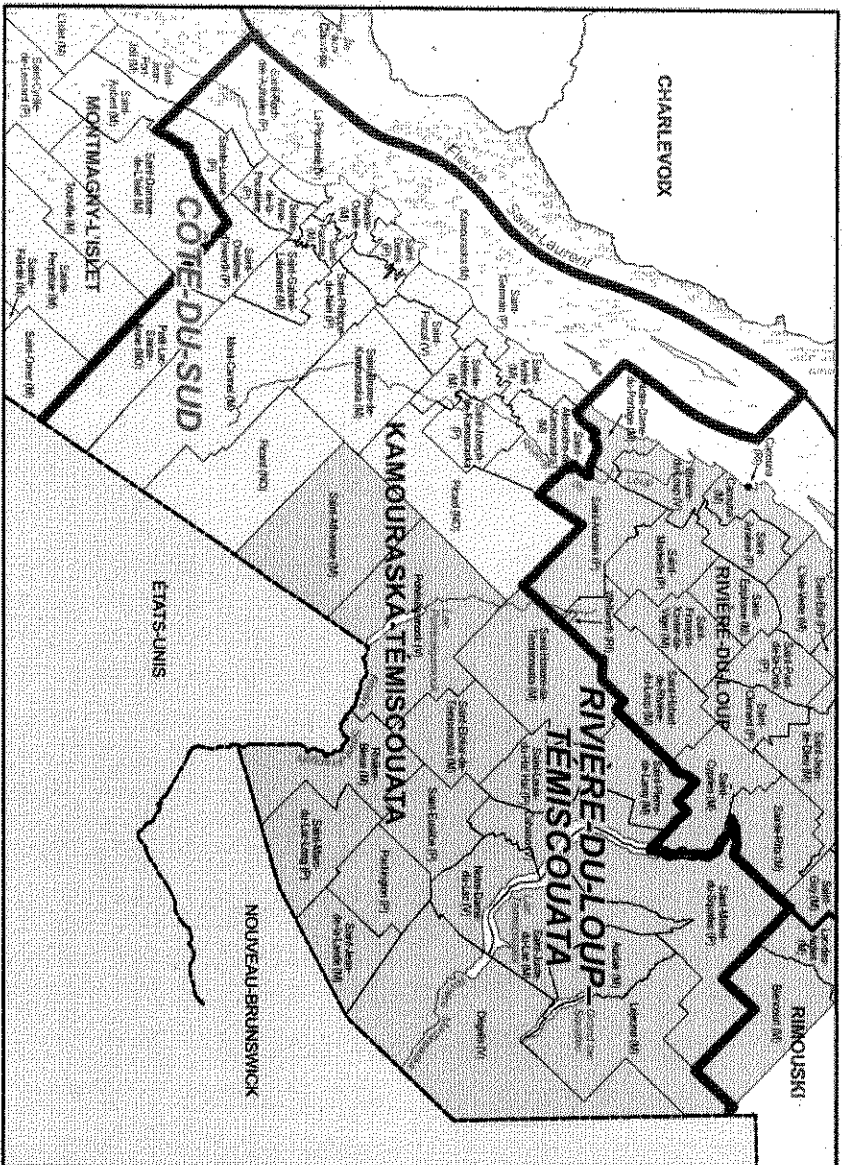
In Dec. 2000 the National Assembly passed Bill 170.

The boundaries of 213 municipalities were forcibly merged into 42 large units, later some were de-merged.

59% of Quebec's population was affected, some 4.272 million people.

Quebec's political class was unwilling to merge 13 *rural* districts involving a few hundred thousand voters of the provincial legislature to rectify the Electoral Imbalance.





Description de la circonscription électorale proposée

La circonscription de Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata comprendrait les municipalités suivantes :

- Aulcair (M), Blanccourt (M), Cacama (M), Cacouna (M), Déguis (M), Lac-des-Aigles (M), Lépine (M), L'Isle-Verte (M), Notre-Dame-des-Néiges (M), Notre-Dame-de-la-Neige (M), Notre-Dame-du-Lac (M), Notre-Dame-du-Portage (M), Packington (M), Pohénégamok (M), Rivière-Bleue (M), Rivière-du-Loup (M), Saint-Antoine (M), Saint-Asaise (M), Saint-Athanas (M), Saint-Clement (M), Saint-Cyprien (M), Saint-Eloi (M), Saint-Elzéar-de-Témiscouata (M), Saint-Ephrem (M), Saint-Eusèbe (M), Sainte-Françoise (M), Saint-François-Xavier-de-Viger (M), Saint-Guy (M), Saint-Honoré-de-Témiscouata (M), Saint-Hubert-de-Rivière-du-Loup (M), Saint-Jean-de-Dieu (M), Saint-Jean-de-la-Lande (M), Saint-Juste-du-Lac (M), Saint-Louis-du-Haut (M), Saint-Marc-du-Lac-Long (M), Saint-Mathieu-de-Flores (M), Saint-Médard (M), Saint-Michel-du-Sautec (M), Saint-Moïse (M), Saint-Paul-de-la-Croix (M), Saint-Pierre-de-Lamy (M), Sainte-Rita (M), Saint-Simon (M) et Trois-Pistoles (M).

Liste des abréviations:

- Limite municipale (au 30 nov. 2007)
- - - Limite d'arrondissement
- Circonscription en vigueur
- Circonscription proposée

CROISIÈRE CIRCONSCRIPTION ÉLECTORALE
Kamouraska-Témiscouata

CROISIÈRE CIRCONSCRIPTION PROPOSÉE
Abitibi-Est

 Attacher la carte proposée

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Assemblée législative • Direction des élections • 2006

An average of **6,653** voters are needed to be “first past the post” in this group while **28,810** were needed in the other group.

It really matters what Que. riding you live in. Indeed, 113,662 voters “first past the post” in the 4 largest ridings outnumbered the 107,040 “first past the post” in Que’s **13** smallest ridings.

We do not have “**relative parity of voting power**” in my view, though this is an elusive concept.

1 an electorate of **95,000** and **Surbiton** had only **48,000** electors(1982 Labour Party action against English Boundary Commission

U.S. Constitution required congressional districts to have populations that were as “nearly equal as practicable.”

SLIDE 6 Conseq’s The success of Que’s political parties reflects riding size and the ideology of voters.

The electoral system itself is influencing election results and is coming between the people and their government..

SLIDE 7 Diagram gov’t % vote Even the PQ Gov’t of 1976 had only 41% of the vote but almost 2/3’s of the seats in the Nat. Assembly.

Curiously and often ignored, the Lib. Gov’t of 1985 was the only Gov’t since WW2 I believe where the majority of Que. voters supported that Gov’t.

SLIDE 8 No Symmetry A major problem preventing an accurate representation by population is the historical hangover from rural times.

Sup Crt did say “Diminishing the voting rights of any group of individuals, such as urban voters, would obviously have an adverse impact on effective representation for their community”.

(1998 Sup Crt and PEI) Electoral districts, varying in population from 5,511 to 68,347, violated the right to vote guaranteed by Section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.)

This diagram is based on your figures after your proposed changes.

45% of the electorate can obtain a majority in the Nat. Ass. if they live in small ridings which is not “relative parity of voting power”.

It takes 56% of those living in large ridings to control 63 seats.

The long tradition of large disparities means that the National Assembly is more of an assembly of large and small districts than it is a parliament representing Quebec by population.

We can ask how deep are Que. elections rooted in the entire population?

SLIDE 9 Tot. pop. Whether we measure by the electorate, those who actually vote, or those who vote for the gov’t, we are not doing that well. **As an antidote to the often overheated rhetoric of Politicians, it helps to remind all of them how little of the total population they actually represent.**

Our present gov't was elected by 16.8% of Que's tot. population. You may suggest that a 3-party race is responsible. However,

Slide 10 Que. 2008 A two party race sees little increase in the % represented by Govts. You would be correct to say that this is true for many other provinces, states, and national elections.

What is the situation in the United States?

Slide 11 US Presid'l Elect. Que. gov'ts @ 16-17% represent even less of the population than does Pres. Bush. We are, in fact, below "Bush league" in terms of how representative our governments actually are.

SLIDE 12 CRE'S PROPOSALS We should be measured by international standards and not just by Canadian standards. The Supreme Court of Canada has accepted both the 25 percent population deviation limits and the "extraordinary circumstances" clause permitting deviations in excess of 25 percent.

Using the language of Que. nationalists, Quebec should not hold itself to the low electoral standards of the ROC. Sadly, we do not fare as well as does the United States in ensuring equal sized electoral districts.

SLIDE 13 SUGGEST'NS We need to repair or system of representation. There is no need to go over to proportional representation, *we should try representation by population.*

"Inequities in the electoral system are not acceptable merely because they have historical precedent and institutions are not constitutional merely because they already exist." (Can Sup Crt 1993)

SLIDE 14 CONCLUSION The Fiscal Imbalance may undermine Federalism but the Electoral Imbalance strikes at the heart of democracy itself. Indeed, mergers and de-mergers of Quebec's electoral districts are sorely needed to rectify what is probably one of the largest Electoral Imbalances in the western world.

The Electoral Imbalance means that the large electoral districts can be ignored because political power in Quebec does not reflect the principle of **one person one vote in equal-sized constituencies.**

SLIDE 15 GRAPH AFTER CRE REFORM In 1989(Dixon vs BC) The British Columbia Supreme Court decreed that "equality of voting power is the single most important factor to be considered in determining electoral boundaries." electoral districts, varying in population from 5,511 to 68,347, violated the right to vote guaranteed by Section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our Supreme Court struck down the BC decision. We cannot predict "first past the post" for these ridings because the 2 large ones have been changed slightly. However, the elections in those ridings will look approximately like this. **We still have extreme electoral imbalance after your changes. This graph indicates that the Nat. Ass. would much rather keep Magdalene Islanders in Quebec than keep West Islanders in Quebec.**