

August 8, 2016

Brief to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Prepared by:

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The purpose of this brief is to formalize the arguments I presented:

1. In my email dated August 2, 2016, addressed to all members of parliament;
2. In my reply by email dated August 5, 2016, to MP Sahota, member of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, who was kind enough to take the trouble to reply to my August 2nd email above on August 5, 2016.

My email dated August 2, 2016:

Dear members of parliament,

A short article appeared in the August 2nd, 2016, edition of The Ottawa Citizen, reprinted from the The National Post: <http://www.pressreader.com/canada/ottawa-citizen/20160802/281943132258118>

It makes an irrefutable case for retaining our present First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system, including for the two strongest reasons as follows:

- Offers Security to do the Right Thing: FPTP is at its best when a government has to do something that is right, but not politically popular. Successive majority governments, for instance, gave the 1990s Jean Chrétien government sufficient cover to slash the deficit. This would have been far more difficult if, as would have been the case under proportional representation, Chrétien had been leading a Liberal minority that could have fallen at any minute on a budget vote. In the last 70 years there would have been only two majority governments in Canada under a proportional representation system.
- It's Fascist-Proof: Extremists do terribly in a FPTP system. Brazen racists have infiltrated almost every legislature on the European continent, but are conspicuously absent in Westminster, the only FPTP system in Europe.

Please be careful not to fix a system that is not broken!

Reply by email dated August 5, 2016, from MP Sahota:

Dear Philip Schubert,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me about electoral reform.

The House of Commons has given the Special Committee on Electoral Reform the task of leading a national consultation process on Canadian federal electoral reform in 2016. I am honoured to be a part of this special all-party committee. The Government is confident that the special all-party committee will be able to consult broadly and will move beyond narrow political interests to address the broader public interest, which includes strengthening the inclusion of all Canadians in our diverse society.

Together, members of the special all-party Committee and I strive to give everyone a stronger and more representative voice in future elections. Our main objective is to replace first past the post with a system that will deliver better governments for all Canadians. The committee will focus on five key principles to get this done:

- The link between voter intention and election results;
- How to foster civility in politics;
- Increase voter participation;
- Ways to safeguard the integrity of our voting system; and,
- Taking into account local representation.

The Government hopes that Canadians will get involved and help shape their future electoral system. It is vital for all Canadians to engage in meaningful dialogue about Canadian federal electoral reform and that the results of your dialogue are shared with our Committee. I encourage you to help us shape Canada's electoral future.

Philip, there are multiple ways you can participate: you can attend your MP's town hall on Electoral Reform, attend the hearings, live tweet your questions to our Committee using the hashtags #ERRE #Q or you may submit a brief to our Committee sharing your concerns and recommendations at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/Participate>. I encourage you to present your views of how Canada should retain the current system through one of these avenues. By joining the conversation, we can together create an electoral system that is reflective of the democratic values Canadians hold.

Thank you again for writing to me. It is because of engaged citizens like yourself that Canada has such a thriving democratic tradition. I am proud to be a part of that and to work for you, representing your concerns in Ottawa.

My reply by email dated August 5, 2016, to MP Sahota:

Dear MP Sahota,

Thank you for taking the trouble to reply.

I will indeed continue to follow up through the mechanisms you suggest. I'm deeply troubled by your statement that the main objective of the members of the special all-party Committee is to replace the First Past the Post system, not determine if it is indeed broken and need of replacing by a system which has given better results around the world, if indeed such exists which is doubtful. It is important that it be remembered that

while your party won just under 40% of the popular vote, meaning that 60% did not vote in favour of your party, it is likely also that of the 40%, an unknown number in effect voted against other parties rather than for your party and a further unknown number voted for your party in spite of the electoral plank regarding changing the voting system.

You can be sure as has eternally been the case to date in Canada that your party will be defeated in a coming election or two, as your party is perceived as being in need of renewing itself through a period of being put in the electoral wilderness. The mistakes made by a party in power can usually be redressed by a new party in power, but the installation of an electoral system which leaves the country in a situation where a minority of extremists can hold the country hostage, cannot be easily redressed and possibly not ever, witness the desperate attempt underway in Italy at present to try and move away from such a system.

If sanity cannot be made to prevail in the work of the Committee and agreement reached that while the First Past the Post is not an ideal system, just better than all the alternatives around the world, then a dangerous but necessary next step needs to be a national referendum. So far referendums in Canadian provinces and in Britain have always stayed with First Past the Post, although a Brexit type outcome can never be excluded as a possibility.