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August 12, 2016

Special Committee on Electoral Reform
House of Commons,
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Members of the Committee

I am concerned there is a serious, fundamental flaw in how politicians, the press, and Canadians are describing the electoral reform option - currently labelled "ranked voting" or "alternative voting". These are terrible descriptors and a serious issue. Let me explain.

Words matter. Correctly, "proportional representation" presents a good word picture of a goal to be achieved. Incorrectly, neither "alternative vote" (used in graphical summaries produced by the Library of Parliament) nor "ranked voting" (used in the press and in some actual circumstances) describe anything meaningfully. "Alternative vote" says "it's different". "Ranked voting" describes "how to mark a ballot". **Neither label portrays or describes the only option requiring every MP to be elected by a majority of registered voters who cast ballots.**

Runoff voting is a cornerstone of democracy. All parties use some form of runoff voting to elect a leader. Every party in every constituency, in every contested candidate selection meeting, uses a form of runoff voting. The result - leaders elected and candidates selected have earned and enjoy majority support. We should celebrate and take seriously an option which requires every MP to earn and enjoy at least 50% plus one vote from his or her electors. "Instant-runoff voting" is a much better descriptor of "alternative voting" or "ranked voting".

A key public and press concern about our "first past the post" system is that a majority of MPs are elected with less than 50% support. Of all the options that are being considered, only "instant-runoff voting" directly responds positively and directly to this public, majoritarian concern. That reality needs to be communicated effectively.

There are two ways that the Special Committee or government can proceed. The first - agree to one and only one label for this alternative - "instant-runoff voting". The second - create a "made in Canada" solution which would be presented as the only option that ensures the majority support for each MP, each in a single member constituency.

It is likely that when Canada celebrates its bicentennial in 2067, historians will note that changes to the electoral process made in 2017 were as significant for Canada's future as was the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is only one chance to get electoral reform right. Your work is of fundamental importance to Canadians.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

