

Dear Electoral Reform Committee,

I hereby submit a suggestion that I think would greatly improve communication around electoral reform, and would also increase interest in this issue within the Canadian public.

Currently, communication of how the various alternative electoral systems work seems to be very complicated and this is likely going to be the main impediment to a constructive discussion (or any discussion at all, for most people) about electoral reform.

To alleviate this, I have the following suggestion. The Committee should create an on-line survey similar to the "Vote Compass" survey that was made available during the previous two federal elections. You could call it the "Electoral System Compass". The survey would ask various questions aimed at finding out the priorities of the survey-taker, which would then be compiled in such a way that he/she can see which type of electoral system his/her priorities match most closely. So, in place of the political parties in Vote Compass, the Electoral System Compass would show the possible electoral systems.

Setting up a survey like this would be hugely helpful. First, it would make it easy for people to see what type of system they would actually favour, without having to understand the details of how that system works. Second, it would immediately engage a large number of people in the discussion of electoral systems - people who would not normally be involved in such a discussion. It would make it very easy for those of us interested in the issue to email friends and relations and encourage them to do the Electoral System Compass. That would then be a starting point for actual conversations. In my experience, it is not too difficult to explain to people that our current system is not proportional. But the conversation ends there because the person becomes concerned that any other system would not have the aspects they like about our current system (e.g. a representative in Parliament). If they completed the Electoral System Compass, their opinions on this and other elements of electoral systems would be included in the set of questions, and so they would know that, whatever system their opinions pointed them to, it would contain the elements they consider to be important.

The third reason the Electoral System Compass could be helpful is for wording questions in a referendum, if it comes to that. In other words, the referendum would not ask whether we want a new system, or what new system we want. Rather, it would ask the same survey questions about our priorities that are asked in the Electoral System Compass. This information could then be collated to work out what electoral system most closely matches the priorities of the majority of people who 'voted' in the referendum.

Many thanks for considering this suggestion. I look forward to completing the Electoral System Compass and finding out which electoral system my priorities match most closely.

Yours sincerely, Lenore Fahrig, Ottawa.