Brief to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform
Ali Bahar

About me: A computer engineer with a quarter of a century's experience on the Internet. My vote has always been discarded, despite living in many different ridings. In my youth, the registration card was always a problem; and, with renting and work precarity, it often remains so! I watched all of your meetings, on CPAC, albeit not as attentively as needed! I have not had the time, either, to study, with due rigour, the various PR alternatives. Ditto, others' Briefs! <u>I favour PR, without hesitation, though I defer to the Committee the choice of a variant.</u>

For brevity, I shall focus on only what, as far as I know, has not been said before.

1) Effectiveness and legitimacy:
  Strictly speaking, PR changes only the *mapping algorithm*: how millions of votes are mapped to the number of seats! Though you have not heard from *innumerable* mathematicians and computer scientists, you have heard enough to know that, in 2016, there is no excuse for a lame, discard-much-of-the-votes algorithm such as FPTP! Yes, there will still be trade-offs*, depending on which PR variant you choose, but all voices will finally be taken into account.

  *There *is* the problem of inversion: a tiny block blackmailing larger blocks, a la Israel. But, better solutions/trade-offs are possible; and, as one of your witnesses said, a healthy number of parties could reduce that likelihood.

2) Engagement:
  I feel that a lowered voting-age would be a beneficial trade-off towards increasing youths' engagement.
  No mandatory voting. Compulsion must not be the answer. Provide incentives, by making the system *responsive* and nimble!
  I submit that it is not that youths do not understand the impact of politics on their lives; rather, that they feel unable to change things. If the weight of others' interests makes government akin to an immovable monolith (as is the case in FPTP) youths will not engage. You cannot go on about "the importance of voting" when their tomorrow does not change! They need to be able to bring about change, before voting or even society represent a vested interest to them.
  It is not irrational to disengage from a system which does not produce results.
  You may disagree with their choices of issue, and of their votes on them, but you cannot then demand their say. And weighting the system towards a very risk-averse aged—a "geritocracy"—cannot be any more fair, or wise for today's pace of change.

3) Accessibility and inclusiveness:
  See Principle 4, below, for recommended cases of on-line voting.
  For registration cards, keep in mind that young people move for reasons other than university! Low incomes entail renting, and sharing apartments. Ditto, people other than suburbanites.

4) Integrity:
  Only in select circumstances, such as the First Nations, Canadians abroad, and home-bound scenarios you have heard about already, I would consider recommending on-line voting. The reason is, primarily, security.
  It is very hard to explain why! Other than engineering intuition, it'd be very difficult to convey, to a

lay audience, why and how computer networks are inherently insecure. Last I heard, the military internet (.mil, as opposed to .com et al) remains physically disconnected from the Internet: there is no copper/fibre wire connecting the two! Nothing less would do. Given resource, anything is hackable; and electronic regime-change (or, more likely, regime tweak) is a lot cheaper than armies!

  And, the Yahoo etc 'hacks' that you do hear about, are only the tip of the iceberg; most you might not hear about.

  The worst problem is not loss of votes, but that you won't even know that something has gone wrong.

  Paper is good! And it provides, well, a paper trail!

  As a side-note, I expect that Estonia's universal citizen-card will violate Canadian privacy rights. It certainly fills me with horror!

5) Local representation:

  Neither I nor any of my friends have ever gone to a local MP for any issue! I submit that FPTP's resulting voter-disengagement has brought about a generational change in this regard.

- A further note, on the notion of a referendum:

  Mapping algorithms are too abstract for even high-school students of math, and too time-consuming for a busy computer-engineer unwilling to dig into the requisite human-factor implications! Proponents of the status quo will simply turn it into Niqab fear-mongering!