Brief submitted by: James Bertram

To The Special Committee on Electoral Reform:

We live in a time of political turmoil for our country. It is not a turmoil of an enemy beating at the gates of our nation, or of the collapse of our institutions. It is a turmoil of the very identity of our nation and our democracy. In recent years, the faith in our method of democracy has been heavily undermined. The Senate is a defunct house that cannot be wielded without accusations of foul play. We have seen a House where a party had maintained a majority for ten years only a little over a third of the popular vote. The people are calling for change and, to the credit of Mister Trudeau and his party, they have agreed to tackle this complex issue.

I write you because I believe I have a solution. An overhaul to the method of our democracy that will improve its function and allow all Canadians to have a greater voice.

We must change not only the House of Commons, but the Senate. And we can achieve both of these goals at the same time. We can improve the accountability and representation of both Houses without compromising our democracy at any level. It will require a voting reform, and a complete re-examination of the role of the Senate within Canadian Democracy.

The Members of Parliament of the House of Commons must continue to be appointed by virtue of local election, and not by a force outside those constituencies. We must allow for local representation that best shows the interests of their communities to continue to exist. If we allow them to be appointed by an external force, then their loyalty will not be to their local communities but to their parties. And if this were allowed to happen, the wills of Canadians would be deafened at a local level and would in fact reduce the representation of Canadians in Federal politics. Therefore we must endeavour to build a system that maintains local representation in its mechanics.

The members of the Senate must be elected. We cannot in this day and age allow for an appointed House to overrule the elected one. But we do require a check and balance to the House and to the power of the Prime Minister. As much or as little faith Canadians may have in our Prime Minister today, we cannot allow the risk of the office being abused in the future. We must build a resilient system that will stand under the weight of views and circumstances no matter how extreme. We must build a Senate immutable to the wills of the Prime Minister, but not one that is immutable to the will of Canadians.

To reach these ends, I propose the following electoral and structural changes:

**Two Systems, One Vote**

For the House of Commons there would be a Ranked Ballot. This would remove the winner take all approach of First Past the Post, and should allow Members of Parliament that more greatly resemble the will of their local population. People would be able to rank their choice of local representatives from most to least desirable. After counting first choices, the lowest party would be knocked off and their second choices taken into account. Then the next would be knocked off, and their second choices would be then taken into account (and the third choices if any of them had been voting for the already knocked off party). This would continue until a party had a majority and became the MP for that riding. You could choose to not rank any other party if only one party was acceptable to you, and if that party was removed your vote would then be considered spoiled.

For the Senate there would be Proportional Representation based on the votes for MPs as detailed above, but proportioned at a provincial level. This will allow us to build a Senate that will represent the broader will of Canadians. Each province would have a pool of seats, which would be divided based on the number of first choice votes they received. Each party would list a pool of Nominated Senators that would receive their seats in descending priority. So, the Theoretical Party's first nominee would get the first seat they would win, and their second nominate their second, and so forth. This is necessary to allow the public to have some idea of the people they are voting for, rather than simply having the party appoint them after the fact. There are a few key benefits this provides, which I will go into details later on in the structural section.

This voting structure allows us to maintain the benefit of our current democracy, which is strong local representation, while allowing us to represent the will of the voters at large. It also allows us to keep the process as streamlined as possible, by keeping to one vote. It is a system that provides the most representation, the most accountability, while keeping a very high degree of ease of use for the public at large.

**Structural Changes to the Senate**

When the Senate was originally conceived it was to serve as the House of Sober Second Thought, as said by Sir John A. MacDonald. I feel that with this new system we will have an Upper House that best pursues that end. The goal of this senate is not to create a rival power to the Prime Minister and the House of Commons, but to create an Upper House that compliments it while providing a different perspective.

With the introduction of an elected Senate, structural changes will be necessary as well as taking the opportunity to correct some perceived flaws.  The number of Senators does need to be greatly increased, with their distribution and selection being the major changes. The first change I would recommend would be making all provinces of equal standing within the Senate. The three territories should be given as many senators as one province in total. We must give some form of representation of Canada's indigenous peoples, maybe even as great as one province, the senators of which they must decide how to choose.

If we give every province nine senators, the First Nations nine senators, and the territories three senators a piece then we get one hundred and eight senators. That means that with this method we only increase the count of sitting senators by three.

The Leader of the Senate would remain an appointed role, and the Cabinet would continue to come from the Lower House.  This allows the power of government to remain much as it is, and allow us to have a very similar system to what we have while being more representative.

These structural changes will allow us to address what have been sticking points of injustice with the Federal Government, and allow for greater representation of Canada's peoples. All the while it will allow us to maintain the same mode of politics that the public is familiar and comfortable with. The Senate will be able to properly pursue its role within modern society.

**Conclusion**

By making local MPs be elected by ranked ballots we ensure local MPs are most representative of the will of their riding. By making the Senate proportional based on those votes, we ensure every vote matters. By rebalancing the seats of the Senate we ensure it can best provide a fair and level view on issues at a national level. By giving the First Nations as many senators as a province we ensure they have a strong voice, and by allowing them to appoint them as they see fit we respect their sovereignty. By maintaining the House of Commons as the more important House we allow the legal structures to remain mostly as they are.

We gain better local representation while getting a more representative national voice. These changes will allow sweeping reforms to our system and increase representation and accountability across both Houses while not increasing the number or distribution of MPs and only adding three more Senators. Best of all for the average citizen all it would demand is changing how they fill out their existent ballots.

I thank you for your time in reading this letter, and if you find these ideas to be of merit then I welcome you to use them. Now is the rare time, that moment once every few generations, we get to define our democracy. We must ensure that future generations remember us well.