

Every Voter Counts Alliance Submission to the Special Commission on Electoral Reform

Broad support for more proportionality:

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission to inform the important work of the ERRE and this historic opportunity for voting reform. The Every Voter Counts Alliance (henceforth EVCA) calls on the ERRE to recommend to Parliament a truly fair and democratic system for the 2019 federal election. The EVCA supports the government's commitment to make 2015 the last conducted under the outdated, winner-take-all First Past the Post System.

The EVCA calls on the government to recommend a system where Canadians can choose a local representative and see their political views represented in Parliament with equal and effective votes for all; a system that ensures that the seats closely match the popular vote. A voting system that will:

- Provide all citizens a real opportunity to elect a candidate according to their values
- Reflect the choice of voters without producing skewed results that do not reflect voter intentions — like false majorities¹ and exaggerated regional divisions.²
- Produce a more diverse, inclusive, and representative parliament.
- Respect the federal character of our country and the existing distribution of seats by province.
- Increase voter turnout

Evidence shows that only a proportional representation can achieve these important goals and values.

The EVCA calls on the committee to get more specific about the new system and study the elements that would make up a made-in-Canada proportional representation system. We are proposing six principles that should form the foundation of such a system.

About EVCA:

The EVCA brings together organizations and individuals in support of a fair voting system where **every vote counts**, independent of party interests. The EVCA provides evidence-based information so that Canadians can make an informed decision about electoral reform, and we provide a platform for Canadians to add their voice and to let their elected representatives know they support fair and democratic elections.³

¹ See for example:

<http://www.nationalpost.com/m/wp/tag/blog.html?b=news.nationalpost.com/m/m/news/canada/canadian-politics/andrew-coyne-our-deeply-flawed-winner-take-all-voting-system>

² See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/only-proportionality-will-fix-our-democratic-malaise/article29944241/>

³ See: <http://www.everyvotercounts.ca/>

To date, over sixty organizations (see Appendix) representing millions of Canadians have supported the alliance. They represent a diverse a cross-section of our richly diverse country.

- **Women's organizations** such as the YWCA , Federation des Femmes de Quebec, National Council of Women of Canada, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Réseau des femmes du Québec and Groupe Femmes Politiques Democratie, that recognize the opportunity proportional representation offers to improve on Canada's dismal record and secure better representation of women in parliament.
- **Immigrant services organizations** such as the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, that recognize the opportunity a proportional system offers new Canadians and marginalized groups, including racialized Canadians, to have their voices heard and included in our democracy.
- **Grassroots organizations concerned with democracy** such as Leadnow, Council of Canadians, Fairvote Canada, Unlock Democracy, and Mouvement Democratie Nouvelle that believe our parliament can be modernized to better reflect the democratic will of Canadians.
- **Environmental organizations** such as Equiterre and Greenpeace that want to see a parliament where parties work together to tackle challenges such as climate change.
- **Labour and worker's rights organizations** such as ACORN Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress, Unifor and USW.
- **Student organizations** such as the Canadian Federation of Students and the Ryerson Students Union
- **Think tanks** such as Institut de Nouveau Monde and the Broadbent Institute.

The Canada we want:

The EVCA believes parliament has a duty to seize this historic opportunity to modernize Canada's voting system. The EVCA has followed the proceedings of the ERRE closely. We have been encouraged by the emphasis so many experts have placed on the principle of proportionality.

We call on the ERRE to recommend a proportional representation system unique to Canada, one that will allow Canadians to choose **local representation** and see their political views represented in Parliament with equal and effective votes for all. A system where **every voter counts**.

Essential elements of a made-in-Canada PR system:

1. Must ensure that **every vote – and every voter -- counts equally** in 2019. Canadians expect this promise to be enacted in full and on time.
2. Must fairly translate voter intentions into seats and reduce distortions, and ensure that the **popular vote** for a Party elects a **proportionate share** of MPs in the House of Commons.
3. The new system needs to make it easier to elect more women, and MPs from First Nations and diverse communities, and **produce a House of Commons that reflects Canadian cultural and political diversity.**
4. PR reform proposals for Canada should should retain some form of **local representation.**
5. If the system includes a top-up component, in order to elect MPs to top-up seats in the House of Commons a party needs to surpass a certain **threshold of the popular vote** in the province.
6. Legislation should stipulate that parties must nominate their candidates through **internal democratic processes.** The particular democratic procedures used by each party must be fully transparent to the general public so that voters can understand how and by whom candidates were selected.

See Appendix

Supporters of the Every Voter Counts Alliance:

Appendix

Supporters of the Every Voter Counts Alliance:

1. ACORN-Canada
2. Broadbent Institute
3. Canadian Federation of Students
4. Canadian Labour Congress
5. Council of Canadians
6. Democracy Watch
7. Équiterre
8. Fair Vote
9. Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie
10. Idle No More
11. Institut du Nouveau Monde
12. Leadnow
13. Mouvement Démocratie Nouvelle
14. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
15. Unlock Democracy
16. YWCA-Canada
17. CUSJ
18. Empringham Neighbourhood Association
19. Grassriots
20. PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation
21. Reimagine PR
22. Syndicat des enseignants du programme francophone
23. Fair Voting British Columbia
24. Democracychannel.net
25. UNIFOR
26. PSAC-AFPC
27. National Pensioners Federation
28. CUPE – SCFP
29. USW – Métallos
30. Réseau des Tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec
31. Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie
32. The Canadian Council of Muslim Women
33. Rainy Rivers District Women's Shelter of Hope
34. Citizens in Action
35. Amies de la Terre de Québec
36. Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter
37. Fair Vote Kingston
38. Réseau des Femmes d'affaires du Québec
39. Réseau des femmes des Laurentides
40. Réseau des groupes de femmes Chaudière-Appalaches
41. Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec
42. Ryerson Students' Union
43. Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU)
44. Syndicat des enseignants du programme francophone
45. Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine
46. Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine

47. Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie (TCMFM)
48. UFCW / TUAC
49. UNIFOR
50. United Steelworkers
51. University of Toronto at Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU)
52. Unlock Democracy
53. Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter
54. Women and Politics
55. Women's Shelter of Hope
56. YMCA - Canada
57. Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice
58. Rainy Rivers District Women's Shelter of Hope
59. Citizens in Action
60. Canadian Arab Federation
61. PIPSC
62. AMAPCEO
63. CFUW
64. AGIR Outaouais
65. Toronto and York Region Labour Council
66. Concertation Femmes Estrie
67. Graduate Students Association of the University of Ottawa