

This submission has three parts. The first is a list of core principles that should be considered, since election reform should consider more issues than only a new voting process. The second is a statement about the new election system to be introduced at the next federal election. The third is an explanation as to why a referendum should NOT be considered at this time and may be considered only after two general elections.

An election is not merely the act of casting a ballot and the process of counting the votes. There are many components to an election and all of them should be considered when looking at election reform. The following list covers most of the additional issues that should be considered:

1. When a party selects/endorsees a candidate to run for office, only local party members should have the right to nominate and vote for the local candidate (within their riding) that they believe can best represent their views in the House of Commons. (Not Party executives.)
2. The new voting system should encourage voters to vote for the Party/Parties that best represents the views of the voter, rather than voting strategically in order to block another Party from winning in that riding.
3. Establishment of riding boundaries and the grouping of ridings into a Range (which is required by a Proportional Representation system), MUST be made by Elections Canada, without any interference from National Parties.
4. The number of MP seats (by Party affiliation) chosen in a Range of individual ridings should approximate the percentage of votes achieved (by Party within that Range) in the election.
5. Proportional Representation should be addressed at the level of a range and NOT at a provincial or Canada-wide level.
6. Allocation of seats (within a Range) must be based solely on the voting preferences cast by the electorate and not on any other factor - including gender, race, language, religion, ethnicity.
7. The Per Vote Subsidy (as implemented on 1 January 2004) should be reinstated immediately after the next federal election (as this will make it easier for smaller parties to gain a foothold in the electoral system).
8. Any money spent on advertising or promotion by a Party during the 6-month period immediately prior to the calling of an election) must be counted as an election expense.
9. Any money spent on promotion by the Government during the 6-month period immediately prior to the calling of an election) be counted as an election expense and be funded by that Party.
10. National, provincial and regional advertising or promotion must be counted as an election expense in the ridings that could be covered by the media (on a pro rata basis).
11. Advertising or promotion during an election (and 6 months prior to an anticipated election) be limited to promoting or explaining either Party policies/platform or the character of the riding candidates (ie. no negative advertising).
12. Social media may not be used for negative advertising.
13. Political Parties must maintain an arms-length relationship with any third party organization (that is playing a role in an election).
14. Any MP found guilty of overspending by more than 10% must resign his/her seat and will not be allowed to run in the resulting by-election and the Party affiliated with that

MP will be limited to by-election spending of an amount no greater than 50% of the election limit for that riding.

This second point concerns that voting system. The committee has heard many arguments that support or refute a particular voting system, so there is no point in repeating those arguments. I would therefore submit two points of view. The new system MUST provide proportional representation, since this minimizes wasted votes, provides a result that mirrors voter preferences and gives parliament not only more views (that reflect the diverse desires of Canadians) but also forces MP's to collaborate and gain consensus on legislation rather than dictating laws and regulations (that happened far too often when false majorities formed the government).

It is highly likely that the final voting system that is preferred by most Canadians will not be realized until after several elections (under the new system) have occurred. Only when Canadians have had a chance to try the new voting system for at least two elections will they be in a position to make an informed decision on the new system and suggest changes to enhance the outcome or to encourage more people to vote.

The specific system that is selected (by parliament) for the 2019 election may not matter that much, since it will probably evolve over time. It will surely be tweaked in order to make it more acceptable to voters and provide a result that is truly fair and proportional.

Before writing the final report on election reform, I strongly recommend that all committee members thoroughly read the proposal crafted by Sean Graham entitled 'DUAL MEMBER PROPORTIONAL: AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR CANADA'. This proposal analyses the strengths and weaknesses of numerous voting systems and presents a structured and concise way of sharpening the focus of ERE committee members. Note that Sean Graham has updated his report (most recent update was on September 18th 2016) and is available at - <https://dmpforcanada.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/submission-to-the-special-committee-on-electoral-reform.pdf>

NOTE – Only an Open List system should be used when selecting MPs to fill the seats needed to fulfill the proportional representation requirements of the election system. This will mitigate the problem of an MP having greater allegiance to the party (that selected him/her) rather than the constituents in the Range (that he/she is representing).

The final point of this submission addresses the question of a referendum on determining the best voting system. This has been raised by the Conservative Party, saying that it is essential and would be undemocratic to not have a referendum. But is that true and what are the problems of holding a referendum?

First, let's consider the question of necessity. We elect our MPs to decide on all federal matters (both important and trivial). We accept that they can decide on tax rates, going to war, pension reform, environmental affairs, the words of our national anthem and even when to adjourn parliament for a summer or winter break. They make these decisions without a referendum. Parliament implemented

our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, repatriated our constitution and brought in our beloved red maple leaf flag without holding a referendum. So what is so special about this issue that may warrant a referendum?

When the Conservative brought in the Fair Election Act a few years ago, they did so without calling for a referendum. But now they say that any change to our elections must be approved with a general referendum. So, why the change of heart on the need for a referendum on changes to the electoral system?

Now look at the problems with holding a referendum.

The cost of a referendum would be \$300 million, according to Marc Maynard (the previous Chief Electoral Officer). Is that a prudent use of public money?

What question or questions should be asked in a referendum? Will it require a simple Yes or No response to one voting alternative? Will several options be presented and voters asked to pick the best one? Should voters be given the choice of retaining the FPTP system, even though the Liberals campaigned on scrapping it and won the election? If several options are listed, what is the minimum number of votes needed to declare that one option is the best? Determining the question or questions on a referendum is not an easy task and no matter what the question(s) there will likely not be agreement on the choice.

How will the public be informed about the pros and cons about a voting alternative? Will the federal government be given sole responsibility for that task or will third parties (advocacy groups, unions or the business community) be allowed to provide information or misinformation? If only the federal government was permitted to provide information, would that information be unbiased or will it merely support the option preferred by that party in power? If corporations, unions advocacy groups or any other third-party organizations were allowed to disseminate information, who would vet that information? (Remember the power of the tobacco industry when the hazards of smoking were first realized and how long did it take for the science behind climate change to overcome the power of the oil industry.)

Finally, as clearly shown in the recent BREXIT vote, a referendum can be a very divisive exercise. That vote showed that Scotland and Northern Ireland wanted to stay in the European Union, while England did not. Voters in London also wanted to stay while rural voters wanted to leave. Young people wanted to stay while older British citizens opted to leave. Many still want a do-over, while others say that the country has decided.

What would happen if a referendum showed that Quebec, or Atlantic Provinces, or Alberta voted one way and the rest of Canada voted the other way. Imagine the split when urban Canadians voted one way and rural Canadians voted another way, or if female voters did not agree with male voters, or there was a significant disagreement between young and older voters? Can we take the risk of these antagonizing and divisive results?

It is difficult to form the right question(s) for a referendum. The result can be unpredictable. Voters can be swayed by special interest organizations and misinformation. And how would the government react to an unfavourable outcome? So do we really need a referendum? The answer is clearly NOT AT THIS TIME.

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