

Context

The biggest electoral reform in the history of Canada was carried out without a referendum. In 1918 women were given the vote, essentially doubling the number of participants in Federal elections. Therefore the suggestion that we cannot change the system without a referendum is without precedent. In fact, I am not aware of referenda being used for any of the provincial electoral system changes that occurred over the last 100 years.

Since 1921, the first election in which women were eligible to vote, we have had a multiparty system. The reality is that First Past The Post (FPTP) worked well until 1921 with only two political parties participating in elections. But increasingly people are frustrated with a system that allows them a range of electoral choices but in which the system makes their choices irrelevant. People are more concerned about policy outcomes and the most robust outcomes come from a more consensual form of decision making.

Arguments that the FPTP system is adequate under current social and political circumstances makes no more sense than arguing that a Model T Ford has a place on the 401.

I have personally voted in every election since becoming eligible to vote. I have been generally frustrated with the choices presented to me on the ballot, especially since I realized that the winning candidate might only be the choice of 35% of the voters. How can that person claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the voters in their district on contentious issues before parliament when the great majority of the voters expressed other political preferences?

Time spent in Sweden while attending the UN Conference on the Human Environment and during a subsequent fellowship (1972) combined with research in Sweden while doing post graduate work at the London School of Economics (1991-1993) on politics and technical decision making caused me to come to respect the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system and its outcomes. As an immigrant to Canada from another country using the FPTP this was a revelation to me and I began to promote electoral reform here in Canada upon my return to Canada.

Conclusions

In preparation for the current discussions on electoral reform I have reviewed the **Voting Counts** report of the Law Commission of Canada (2004), considered other evidence (including reading submissions to your committee and watching hearings on line) and studied the following two web resources:

<http://www.idea.int/esd/best-electoral-system-test.cfm>

<http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/default/>

Based on this research and my attendance at the October 4 hearing in Halifax I have reached the following conclusions:

- The best electoral system for Canada is a version of MMP. FPTP is obsolete in light of the diversity in Canada. STV would not work well with the large range of population density in Canada (I believe this problem resulted in the defeat of the referenda in BC on electoral reform) and pure list PR would be difficult to implement given the relatively low overall population density of Canada. I would personally have no concern about increasing the size of parliament should that be necessary.
- It is desirable to implement a new electoral system without a referendum as long as there is an adequate review process to allow voters properly evaluate the new system.
- I would recommend against internet voting and if implemented it cannot replace the paper ballot. At the very least there needs to be a paper trail that can be audited.
- Mandatory voting would be a sign of failure of the overall political system. Citizens will vote if they truly believe their vote will lead to effective representation. They have been increasingly disenchanted with the status quo both in terms of the effectiveness of their votes and the functioning of parliament.

Respectfully submitted by:
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