

To: Special Committee On Electoral Reform
Subject: Summary Comments: Mixed-Member Proportional Representation System
Date: October 6, 2016

The writer has been, and continues to follow the Committee's proceedings and its expert-based submissions in the call for electoral reform input. Rather than reiterate findings of others, the writer concisely offers his summary comments and opinions.

Abandon 19th Century First-Past-The-Post (FPTP). No Closed Party Lists

1. The negative outcomes and evidence relating to the democratic representational flaws in the FPTP electoral system is being more than adequately and overwhelmingly documented to the Committee. The writer opposes retaining the current FPTP, or any Single Member Plurality or like non-proportional, single-winner-per-district or synonymical system. The writer opposes Closed Party Lists which tend to favour the national interests of a political party over the interests of local constituencies.

Implement Mixed-Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) with Open, Flexible Party Lists

2.(a) The writer supports adopting, adapting and implementing the MMPR electoral system, to include Open and Flexible Party Lists, as the most democratic and proportionally representative of electoral systems. MMPR retains locally selected representation and is proportionally representative nationally - across political parties. Importantly, the form of ballot for MMPR need not be complex.

2.(b) The Committee's first order of business must include a declaration that the flawed 149 year old FPTP electoral system is being abandoned; that a more democratically proportional electoral system is being investigated with public input for implementation for the December 2019 Federal election.

No Referendum

3. The writer supports and agrees, and the Committee has been advised by experts, that there is no legal/constitutional requirement to hold a referendum before implementing electoral system change. Holding a referendum remains a political decision. A Committee or political recommendation to hold a referendum will suggest that the Committee has done a poor job of placing sufficient and meaningful information before the public. The writer holds the view that a referendum is used for partisan delay; to cause obfuscation and frustration among electors; and, in order to retain electoral system status quo via an intended failure on a question.

I wish the Committee well in its consultative efforts to engage and obtain the informed opinion of Canadians: especially when reading the minutes wherein those in its midst, myopically fixated on party self-interest and an rigid ideologically mindset, are obsessed with retaining the flawed FPTP.

Opposed to Online, Electronic Voting

4.(a) In an increasingly insecure time of malicious, intrusive electronic manipulation and invasion of privacy, it is imperative that people remain the principal delivery agents in the confidential taking, tabulation and reporting of voter action. Democracy has an input cost: direct participation by people.

Voter Personally Marks Paper Ballot

4.(b) The writer holds the view that a voter's personally marked paper ballot, personally placed in a secure ballot box, visibly witnessed by election personnel and any scrutineer, in a specified public, open and physical location, is the democratic safeguard for a honest, transparent and open voting procedure delivering: trust, authenticity, credibility and reliability via the accurate recording of the event.

Retain Election Polling Places and Staff

4.(c) The writer opposes the elimination of people from direct attendance and participation in the vote-taking procedure. Such elimination diminishes democratic engagement. The presence of people as vote-takers dispels doubt about the ballot marker and eliminates the possibility of third party manipulation via 'electronic clicks', malfunctioning software or distorted transmission of voter intentions. The vote 'count' is physical, with several polling staff and scrutineers present – and all ballots are reconciled and stored as future evidence to validate the procedure. Electoral democracy is not about convenience - rather it demands direct responsible individual participation to safeguard against increasingly the nefarious, clandestine and manipulative opportunities available in people-reduced systems.

People Safeguard Against Corruption

4.(d) Election polling personnel and scrutineers can readily explain events (error, inadvertence, fraud, corrupt practices, criminality) that may occur in a voting procedure, especially when that procedure has securely retained and stored all scrutinized physical ballots, summaries, sworn statements and materials, in evidence.

Accessibility

5. The writer commiserates with, and supports specific and secure procedures which engage, enable and encourage those of differing abilities the opportunity to participate directly to cast their intentions via the vote. Similarly, the writer supports efforts to collect the vote cast by citizens abroad in service to Canada. In all other circumstances, the writer suggests that the current polling, advance polling and proxy voting processes, be maintained. Elections Canada performs admirably in these areas.

Oppose Compulsory Voting

6. The writer opposes compulsory voting. Voting is a democratic right and a responsibility that includes the right to refuse to vote without penalty or reward. It is suggested that MMPR ensures that vote-voices count and this will improve turnout as citizens are engaged to participate knowing their voting-voice now is of important to the outcome.

General

Needs, Aspirations Of Voter

7. The Committee is reminded that the electoral system is designed to represent and meet the needs and aspirations of the voter and not the interests and ambitions for power of the political party. With the wealth of evidence available, the Committee's sole task will be to adapt, from excellent models, a new MMPR electoral system. Again, Elections Canada can assist admirably in this area.

'Public' Information Program

8. The Committee is reminded that Canada's private large mainstream media largely has been silent in this matter and, when it does speak, it is largely negative about the need for change as it clamours for a referendum. It is suggested that any informational program to inform and educate the voter be placed with 'public' broadcasters (CBC, TVO and the like, and truly independent print media) all as impartially organized and delivered through Elections Canada. It is suggested that any poor understanding of the recommended electoral reform will be a direct reflection on the Committee's performance.

Reform Need Not Be Complicated

9. Reforming the electoral system is not, and need not be made, complicated. The design of electoral systems has accumulated much studied evidence and experience. The Committee's task is more a matter of adapting and applying existing successful methodologies to reflect the Canadian circumstance. The Committee has, and will be expertly advised on how best to rationalize design; to effect detailed implementation; and to inform and educate the public in order to obtain reasoned input.

Resources Abundant

10. The Committee is reminded it has abundant administrative resources readily available to devise and implement a MMPR electoral system via departmental staff, Elections Canada and Provincial Returning Officers, along with independent academic experts. Accordingly, there need be no delay in implementing a program to inform and educate Canadians on the new electoral system. The writer has faith in the intelligence, fairness and willingness of Canadians to embrace a more proportional electoral system. Elections Canada has confirmed that it can accommodate the procedures necessary to implement electoral reform in time for the October 2019 Federal Election.

MMPR Best Reflects Committee Principles

11.(a) MMPR best reflects the Committee's 'Principles For Electoral Reform': 1) Effectiveness and legitimacy, 2) Engagement. 3) Accessibility and inclusiveness, 4) Integrity, and 5) Local representation. It is highly regarded, widely used and successful around the world.

11.(b) On the other hand, our 149 year-old FPTP minimally reflects some of these principles in part. FPTP does, however, makes it easy for the political party to target and manipulate specific voter groups for partisan gain – a targeted gain that is not intended to reflect all voter interests – a targeted gains of 100% say from 40% of the voters. FPTP was inherited from England and it is suggested that it is the least representative and most unjust of elections system. Canada is a huge land with a diverse population and requires proportional representation to choose decision-makers who reflect these diverse interests.

Related Need To Reform

12. On a cautionary note, and witnessing the presidential election malaise occurring in the 'largest industrial banana-republic' to the south, the Members may derive the pressing need to reform now the flawed electoral system in this country. Given FPTP's abuse potential, it is imperative that Canada abandon this broken electoral model which can irreparably entrench an exclusive, constricted, vote-suppressing and ultra-ideologically dominated rigid two-party system. That confounding sorry land uses the same FPTP electoral system inherited from

England.

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