

## **Brief to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform**

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I recently turned 60 and have voted in every election where I have been eligible to vote since reaching voting age. Only in the last two federal elections has the candidate I voted for been elected. Here in the Saanich-Gulf Islands riding I voted Green and am fortunate to have a Green Member of Parliament, but over half a million other people across Canada also voted for Green candidates and all Green voters in the country have exactly one MP representing their views. If this is democracy, it's a very weak form of it.

We can do better and join the majority of other countries around the world that have adopted a proportional representation system of voting. We know that majoritarian voting systems such as we have now tend to drive us toward a two-party system, in which small parties are either poorly represented, or not represented at all. We know that 'first past the post' systems emphasize opposition over consensus and exaggerate the differences between groups of citizens.

I would like to see Canada adopt a proportional representation (PR) system for the next election. Deciding which PR system we adopt will be very difficult, and it will be too easy to get bogged down in debate over which system is best. Therefore, I think we should follow the example of New Zealand and adopt a simple Mixed Member PR system, in which half of the MPs are elected as they are now, but with ridings of approximately twice their current size, with the remaining half elected according to the vote count for each party in the first half (the 'riding' MPs). The second group of MPs would be chosen from a ranked list of candidates provided by each party. There are PR systems that are fairer and more proportional than this system, but this is simple and sufficiently similar to our current system that voters will have little trouble understanding it.

We do not need an expensive referendum to decide which system to adopt, because many people who actually want change will vote against electoral reform if it is not the particular form of voting that they favour. Better to follow the example of New Zealand and pick a simple system that most people can comprehend, on the understanding that there will be a referendum after the new system has been used in, say, three elections. The referendum question could then be: Do you want to return to the old system, continue with the new system, or further refine the new system? I am confident that after seeing the positive results of a fairer system that Canadians would want to stick with a PR system of voting.

Thank you for undertaking this difficult, but very important work. I fervently hope that we will soon have true democracy in Canada.