

Special Committee on Electoral Reform
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Chair person.

I shall be brief in my submission in accordance with word count Committee rules. I am committed to the first past the post (FPTP) electoral regime that the present government has deemed not to be used in the next federal election. I will thus be presenting many generalizations. You will have plenty of the usual people who want change that have presented in the BC and Ontario studies as well the 2004 federal study on elections.

Their presentations will be the same old ivory tower demands or losing party demands for some new form. I can pretty well guarantee that the public has not asked for a change as frequently stated and more so I emphasize that conclusion that two or more referendums the public has decided to stay with the first past the post system.

Further Canada is rated very highly as the number two country to live in of which governance as we presently have is one of those and measuring ingredients.

The committee mandate has chosen to discount the present system in its entirety. The late constitutional expert Eugene Forsey would give good guidance that what the government is trying to achieve can't be done by the present method. Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier in his first election had thought about proportional representation but in his good wisdom and all Prime Ministers since it was not put forward. The usual jargon feature would be that if it is not broken why change it.

I might add that after each election there are the usual pundits writing about the percentages to achieve power but the electors know the procedure and accept the results. Overlaying the present election percentages to show how the result would be different using a proportional representation system or other system I am sure would not hold up to scrutiny as there are be far more future unmeasurable changes potentially using another system.

I have been in every election since 1957 both provincially and federally in every capacity including an elected member of the provincial legislature of Ontario. In all of the elections the voters have generally achieved what they desired, by throwing the rascals out or indeed at times electing a government they wanted. Diefenbaker and Chretien had a cabinet revolts, the others had overstayed their welcome; sometimes the electorate not being sure produced minority governments.

Historically from BNA Act of 1867 the earliest elections the parties were not so defined with many independent members. Today the parties have morphed into more structured

parties, with names and policies unfortunately that are not controlled by legislation on how they govern themselves. Further because of the geographical features of Canada there have been many regional parties throughout our history, some more successful than others, some disappearing or making no influence in the system whatsoever. Countries that use other forms of voting are generally small in geography, more homogeneous in population with few regional differences or disparities. Presently we have many parties in each election and the Green party running straw candidates with no hope of success in many ridings just to build up their vote count embellishing my guarantee the number parties will increase and many straw candidates will also be forthcoming in any system chosen.

The leading historical written authority on The Government Of Canada by Dawson is elementary that so many of our controlling features of government are not in the Constitution or indeed the more recent the Elections Act of Canada but in constitutional conventions that have usually been established by practice growing into obligatory rules.

For example: cabinet, Prime Minister, votes of confidence, asking the party with the most seats to form the government are not mentioned. This past election a great deal of discussion was carried out on potential of minority government and how would the Byng King rule, another constitutional convention be applied.

We have come historically from responsible government, "rep by pop" or representation by population by individuals being nominated and elected in their designated local ridings which have only been changed over time to represent increases in population.

The two major referendums on changing electoral systems have been defeated which gives an indication that the status quo is what is desired, not any change.

There are enough studies to indicate that any other form of election procedure is of limited potential upside and similarly negative downside. This includes no greater increase in voter turnout, no greater diversity, but greater influence by the increase in the number of smaller parties and their leverage on the larger parties, no quick result on vote counting, (some PR's take weeks or negotiating to gain party power), internecine party intrigue to create a new leader and frequently a new prime minister and finally smaller voting percentages give parties control.

The present government seems to be not in favor of a referendum which would be a start to electoral reform but I would further comment without doing an excessive amount research that even a referendum would not conclude the electoral changes could be made because as I have mentioned previously so many of them are constitutional conventions. More likely any change will need the Constitution's usual formulaic manner by provinces. I use two examples to this conclusion: one the last government tried to reform the Senate and the Supreme Court said no and two as it did with the Supreme Court judge proposal that was not in the historical pattern.

Another feature may be that another system may require more MPs and that would not be acceptable to many voters.

Given how the system presently is governed by parties seeking greater control on the membership any other system putting greater control into the hands of parties, indeed smaller parties do not seem to achieve anything.

Those in favor of reform point out the recent changes in New Zealand and Australia and their experiment would not conclude we should change our present system. Change is proposed by a small number of political writers and political science professors not the public. There is no need for a change whatsoever in our present system with its virtues and defects but none of them sufficient to change or throw the entire system overboard.

I have heard in all elections that when a party or an individual's candidate is not elected the comment is they have wasted their vote. I like and would use sports metaphors: When you go to a horse race you're entitled to bet on any horse as you are when you go to an election, you may vote for any candidate or party candidate, however, all of them do not win but you still have the opportunity vote or bet.

The Supreme Court beckons any changes.

My Recommendation is to make no changes.

All respectfully submitted.

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