

Brief to the Electoral Reform Committee of the HOC

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I am 79 and a Canadian citizen now for many years.I am a retired Mechanical design engineer and a political activist.

My opinion regarding the present Electoral system of voting:

It is not fair. My vote did not count for the last 52 years of elections. My votes for a candidate in my electoral district have always been a wasted vote in my opinion since I started voting in Canada in 1963.The vote was not counted as long as I did not vote for the winner under the First Past The Post (FPTP) voting system.

At one time I went to vote for my candidate and my considered party simply because we, the electoral district association and the party of my choice ,would receive \$1 for every vote towards our election efforts in the future. This has since been rescinded!Thus in the hopes of snagging a really excellent candidate next time I voted but my heart was not in it because the candidates were not strong enough to capture the imagination of a citizenship accustomed to voting for the incumbent .

Besides , many of my like-minded friends, instead of voting with their heart ,voted STRATEGICALLY in order to oust the incumbent or the candidate of the party of the previous winner .Thus my candidate lost votes which should have counted for him/her.It simply does not seem fair and this process and result has lasted , in my case, for 52 years! Strategic voting is nonsense! Voting for someone you do NOT want to represent you so as to get rid of the one who is in power and needs to be removed. One should always vote FOR a candidate/party rather than AGAINST a party or their leader.The adversarial and partisan house of commons of today does not work for me and really does not work for all citizens in my opinion.

My comments regarding the criteria set by the committee :

I agree with their points of reference in deciding on a suitable system to replace FPTP.

.1. Local Representation should be retained. Pure List PR is not acceptable.

2. The system shall be reasonably easy to follow at the ballot box for an average citizen's intelligence. All the PR systems of today are easy to follow in my opinion and should be for most average citizens who are provided with some clear and concise education by Elections Canada beforehand.

3. Proportional Representation (PR).

Whatever proportional system, as chosen by the committee, should give the final number of seats in the house of commons for each party to be closely PROPORTIONAL to the percentage of votes received of the total cast for the respective parties in the region /province. A reasonable minimum percentage requirement for a party to qualify for at least one make up seat or more should be 5 percent as in most other democracies with PR. Thus every vote will count for every voter as long as his party receives at least 5 per cent of the popular vote.

Voters will be more engaged and political parties will have to engage all peoples in all Electoral Districts to get seats rather than cherry picking where they spend their time educating people on their platforms. There will be no "safe" seats. By eliminating the winner-take-all system this will improve accessibility and inclusiveness i.e more seats for women and First nations and minorities. In one proportional system even independent candidates can result as in the case of Ireland under their Single Transferable Vote proportional system which has been in use now for 70 plus years, I think. It is not a complicated ballot. The time for counting however will definitely take longer. But, so what! As long as it is fair and accurate and recountable in close results as is the case now with any close finishes.

I am not in favour of the non proportional voting system called Alternate vote (AV) as practiced in the Australian lower house. My OZ friend described how disproportional their results are. "In an extremely close finish on first count with three parties almost tied in the method of counting to determine who won from the ranked ballot a "dingbat" got elected", she said.

I am not in favour of Pure list PR which is simply voting from National Party Lists - there would be a complete loss of local representation. despite 100 per cent proportionality being the result.

If Party Lists are on the ballot as with Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) they should not be Closed Lists. Open party Lists will allow more voter strength and reduce Party executive control. The control of the leader of a party over the Party lists that are submitted is too risky and unfair. Too much

power of the executive over candidates names on the ballot is dangerous (for example. the current control of MPs in the house of commons by the PMO is deadly to good efficient government).

4. The effectiveness of a suitable PR system would allow for real debate in the house of commons not the farce we have now. The back benches are like "trained seals".The population would be more engaged in the decisions of the house as they realize that their votes did count.

5. My recommendation:

Definitely the PR systems being submitted by Fair Vote Canada : MMP, STV and Rural Urban Proportional are ALL more suitable in my opinion and I would accept any of these over our present FPTP system . Voting in the ballot box will be easy. Voting will be counted by hand and will be legitimate and Local representation will remain in place. More women and minorities have a chance and will be on the ballot and hence will be more likely to be our representatives where enough number of party seats are garnered via proportionality . Even Coalition governments work well worldwide and are very acceptable in my opinion.

Digital Voting:

Finally I am not in favour of internet or digital voting using our computers . It is not proven yet to be safe from tampering.

Compulsory Voting:

Studies should be made to determine how effective this will be and this is not the time to turn this requirement on the electorate. This would constitute FORCING a new system of voting on them.

Referenda;

These are imperfect for decision making. There is lots of evidence of this e.g Brexit.

The House of Commons, as constituted , admittedly under an antiquated and unfair system, is still the best way we have to decide on our new system of voting.

Reviewing our new system in the future.

After two elections , perhaps ,when citizens have themselves the experience and knowledge of the system a revision or cancellation could be decided again in the house for majority of proportionally chosen representatives to be happy with the change.

All these are possible with PR:

1. Effectiveness and legitimacy
2. Voter engagement
3. Accessibility and inclusiveness
4. Integrity
5. Local representation

In closing I would like to thank every MP in the House of Commons for approving the Electoral Committee structure proportionally . Thanks go out to MP Nathan Cullen for his motion on this. My sincere thanks to the Minister of Government Institutions, Maryam Monsef , who has proven to me (and I have followed closely , believe me) that she is sincerely open to all options and not biased towards a change to AV as some sceptics have suggested. Her efforts to cross this country hearing from so many of us will be worthwhile. The country is ready for change to our electoral system of voting.

Also, in the future, I would like to see Parliamentary Reform to make our HOC debates and committees work better. There is far far too much power in the office of the PMO and this needs to be changed. But let's leave that for another day, okay? Now we need a change to Proportional Representation in the House of Commons.

Thank You

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