

## Submissions to All Party Special Electoral Reform Committee

Submitted by: Amber van Drielen

I have watched the audio and video broadcasts of many of the all-party special parliamentary committee on electoral reform meetings over the summer and fall of 2016. Thank you to all members for their hard work on this matter.

The committee is tasked with considering options that would advance the following principles for electoral reform: effectiveness and legitimacy, engagement, accessibility and inclusiveness, integrity, local representation. I support all of these principles and my comments below will be framed with these principles in mind.

### **1. I recommend that we update our federal electoral system to a form of Proportional Representation.**

Supporting comments:

- Update our voting system to Proportional Representation has been supported by provincial citizen's assemblies, research, commissions, including the 2004 Law Commission of Canada Report.
- Vast majority of the ERRE witness were in favour of PR and the vast majority of the public who presented were also in favour of PR. There is no need for further study.
- I support MMP, STV, DMP, Rural-Urban ...any solid PR system. If MMP, I would hesitate for closed list – easily perceived to be party controlled etc. I would suggest flexible, open list, best runner up etc. However, these are ideas.
- In my opinion it would be best if the committee reached a consensus on a form of PR and even provided recommendations of some of the “details”.
- The committee has had the benefit of hearing from experts for the past months as well as hearing from the public. The other MP's in the House of Commons will not have this level of knowledge or education on the issue. Few will.
- The public will be well served by a consensus recommendation that provides details and explanation for certain choices. I have heard friends say “I am in favour of PR and I leave it to the experts to figure out which system” The committee in this case is our “expert.” Please make a solid PR recommendation.

Additional comment on modern technology and large distances:

- I live in a rural riding. I would like PR in rural areas.
- There is no one “rural voice.” Rural people are diverse with diverse political views .. PR allows better representation of these diverse views.
- Please consider that FPTP was brought in when we used horse and buggy for travel. Now we are 2016. I usually communicate with my MP by email. I also followed these entire proceedings online and CPAC and twitter.

- Modern communications have reduced the need to travel to effectively communicate with our MP in many situations (not all).
- With “regional MP’s” or “multi member districts” there will still be the same number of MPs as now and constituency offices will still be available same as now – and not every issues requires a visit to the office. In other words, I see no concerns with larger districts /regions that have several MP’s to represent our diverse rural voices. It would be wonderful.

**2. These are some of the problems with FPTP...with annotation from my own experiences:**

For the following reasons and more I believe Canadian would be well served by getting rid of FPTP

- Lack of legitimacy and unfair:

Our election outcomes do not reflect voters’ wishes. Our federal governments make extremely important decisions that impact on our lives on a daily basis. From health accords, to interprovincial trade, to international treaties, trade agreements, and climate change issues federal government decisions have profound and long term consequences. These types of decisions should not be made by governments that are supported by less than 40% of votes cast – this has no legitimacy.

FPTP: No representation for many voters

- As an example, for a 20 year long period my home riding (in rural western Canada) was what is referred to as a “safe seat”. The MP in my home riding for 20 years took positions and voted (HoC votes) the opposite of how I would wish. He knew where his votes came from and it was not me. This does not mean an MP is unpleasant – not at all –my comment is not personal. Simply he had few values and ideas of importance in common with me and he knew he didn’t need my vote. Luckily I escaped my rural riding for a few years for other adventures and post-secondary education in the city.
- To be honest, I also find the “right to vote” rather meaningless in this type of “safe seat” riding. I might rather have caught up on sleep, went hiking or focused on my work or meaningful volunteer projects. I say this with regret – but truthfully any of these activities would have been more productive than the time spent to go cast my vote. I already knew before I went to the voting station that my vote would not matter- there would be no reflection of my vote in the outcome of the election. Rural Alberta has many of these “safe seat” ridings. Other regions of Canada was well.
- “strategic voting”

2015 election my home riding inherited a progressive town due to boundary changes. We elected an MP of a different color by less than 300 votes. I attribute our MP's win to strategic voting. I didn't vote my first choice. I know many others who expressed to me that they were considering not voting first choice. The risk was that if I voted how I wanted to, I would actually help elect the MP that I really wanted to get rid of and who was from the party that had had the seat for decades. I hate strategic voting. The true values and ideals of voters are hidden when people vote strategically. But it is worse to vote first choice with good chance of electing last choice.

- Vote Spitting:

While living in the city I have in the past gotten involved in political party campaigns at the federal level. I have not done so in years. I got tired of having people visibly upset and agitated even while saying they "loved the policies I (my party) proposed". Why? They were concerned about vote splitting. It became a moral /ethical dilemma. How to participate in a constructive manner given our voting system? For me the answer was to stop participating in federal political campaigns. Of course, I could have made a different choice – continue none-the-less, change parties etc. – but none of this really addressed the problem. I mention this because I find it disturbing. The problem is FPTP.

Thank you for making 2015 the last election under FPTP!