

To the Special Committee on Electoral Reform,

My name is Jacob Kearey-Moreland and like you, I too was a candidate for parliament in the 2015 Canadian federal election, one of six officially registered candidates on the ballot in the riding of Simcoe North. Unlike you, I was not representing or affiliated with a political party nor did I receive the most votes in my riding. Some say that I lost - but for me, democracy isn't a game that one can win or lose. I was technically identified by Elections Canada as a "Non Affiliated" candidate, but I self-identified as a Cooperative Interdependent - perhaps the first Interdependent candidate in any election ever! I was 26 years old, making me one of the youngest candidates across the country. I participated because I was and am deeply concerned about the long term health and viability of our democratic institutions, and so have focused my adult years on promoting youth participation in democracy, in part through the Youth Vote Canada project I initiated at the beginning of the 2011 federal election.

I have a unique perspective, having experienced first hand the ins and outs of our electoral system, in addition to representing the voices of 617 of my fellow Canadian voters, who marked my name on the ballot in the last election.

My contribution to your committee will be brief and I welcome your feedback or follow up, including to appear before your committee to further detail my experiences as a non affiliated youth candidate.

1. Lower the voting age, or abolish all voting age restrictions by amending the Canada Elections Act to allow Canadian citizens over 14 the right to vote, while considering the implementation of a basic Canadian democracy "competency" test for Canadian citizens under the age of 14 wishing to exercise their Charter Right to Vote.

Why?

- The age in which people can become members of the Liberal and Conservative Party of Canada is 14 enabling them to vote for their policy, leaders, etc...
- 14 is the minimum legal age to make life threatening medical decisions
- In some provinces, the age to begin work and paying taxes is 14 or 15
- People under 18 pay taxes but have no representation in decision making

- 16 years is the age of consent to sexual activities (old enough to have sex with, and marry your MP – not old enough to vote for them)

As you can see the voting age restrictions violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which grants All Canadian citizens the right to vote. Only when justified can our Charter Rights be infringed and as you can see, the current age-based restrictions on voting rights are neither reasonable or justified and is wildly and illogically arbitrary. This situation results in a desperate lack of representation among our countries young people, whose voices, values and experiences are ignored or in this case, legally suppressed. No wonder young people have the lowest voter turnout of any age demographic, and no doubt this lack of youth participation results in a parliamentary agenda that is explicitly hostile to youth interests, such as education, equality of opportunity and the environment. The fact that young people are systemically discriminated against within our democratic institutions threatens both the future and legitimacy of these institutions.

2. Political and Campaign Finance Reform & Neutral CBC Election Coverage

- As a non affiliated candidate my election financing opportunities were limited to the length of the election period, whereas candidates for political parties have the benefit of issuing tax-deductible receipts for political donations year round. This puts all independent and non affiliated candidates at a major disadvantage. I recommend re-instituting the per-vote subsidy for both parties and candidates, and if I choose to run in the future, that money be given to me upon my official registration as a candidate in the following election.

On election day, taxpayer funded coverage from CBC displayed a profound and offensive bias towards the 4 larger party candidates, while excluding another party candidate and myself, from their coverage, despite the fact my candidacy was featured prominently in local press. You can see from this screenshot from the CBC website on election day, that the CBC prioritized the sharing of outdated relationship statuses and statistics from our riding, rather than displaying the names and photos of all the official candidates (see <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/election-ridings/canada/#2015-35100>) and my change.org petition <http://chn.ge/1PBhhKr> .

3. Proportional Representation towards Direct Democracy.

I believe a system of Mixed Member Proportional elections are a step in the right direction, but envision a system of direct democracy in the not to distant future. I favour open lists and do not think that “thresholds” above 1% of the vote are necessary, given the goal is to make every vote count.

Furthermore, beyond PR, to truly “make every vote count' as the Prime Minister promised in his election campaign, Canada would need to implement a form of direct democracy. Consider for example, that in the riding of Simcoe North I received 1.1% of the votes, or 618 in total. There is no reason why I should therefore be denied the opportunity to represent these voters in parliament where my share of the vote would be directly proportionate to the number of votes I received. I do not deserve 100% of the power of the riding – but neither does my current MP, who received less than 50% of the vote. Canadians are mature human beings capable of understanding and working with fractions, as well as sharing power with one another. There were around 1800 candidates in the last federal election – why could all of us not be representatives, and our respective power is proportional to the popular vote we received?

I am concerned that a system of PR would institutionalize political parties in our electoral system, and as a non affiliated candidate, but would welcome a more balanced and fairer electoral system in which political parties are proportionally represented according to their proportion of votes.

Moving forward into the future, consider for example, the way in which publicly traded corporations are run. In a corporation shareholders are given a proportion of power based on their relative investment in the company. If I own 1.1% of the shares of the company – I have 1.1% control over how the company is run. Why could our country not be run in a similar way, in which all Canadians are given an equal share in the company and an equal say in it's future? It is a simple concept that is widely applied in our society, and to massive organizations. In practice, this would ideally require 1 large riding encompassing the entire county. Canadians could either choose to contribute or vote on any issue before the house, or to select a delegate to vote on their behalf. This wouldn't negate the ability for local representation – it would guarantee the ability of Canadians to select their representative without the risk of their candidate losing in an electoral contest. Rather, every Canadian voter would be represented regardless of political persuasion.

Thank you for your time,

Jacob Kearey-Moreland,

Cooperative Interdependent candidate, Simcoe North