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Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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Committee Members:

My name is John Warren and I think the following principles are important to electoral reform and should be considered by the Committee:

1. Current party nomination processes should be maintained. Contested nominations ensure that candidates successfully pass what is, in effect, the first electoral test, being that they can convince a majority of the riding's party members that they are the best candidate and the possibility of contested nominations limits the power of unelected party officials to determine who the nominees will be.
2. Canada is very large and so ridings and constituency offices should be maintained to ensure that Canada's Parliament has a local face and a local source of information and assistance for Canadians in their dealings with the Government of Canada.
3. All members who sit in Parliament should be chosen only from candidates in that election, whether elected through First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) or Mixed Proportional Representation (MPR) so that all MP's in Parliament only get there by being exposed to the electorate. This means they will have the opportunity to discuss their party's policies with and receive feedback from a group of voters at first hand, giving them a connection to ordinary Canadians not possible under a list system.
4. No Canadian voting system should allow party officials to prepare lists from which members are selected to sit as MP's. A list system distances candidates from the electorate and transfers far too much power to a few unelected party officials, making listed individuals much more responsible to party officials than to the electorate.
5. There should be a vote limit below which parties are not entitled to MPR seats; for example 2 or 3% of the population of Canada. Pure Proportional Representation results in a proliferation of very small parties and gives those small parties much more power in coalition governments than their votes justify.
6. MP's elected through MPR should be reflective of all regions of Canada and should be those who received the most votes in a region who were not elected on the FPTP basis.
7. The percentage of MP's elected through MPR should be approximately 10% or 34 seats in the current Parliament of 338 seats. 34 MPR seats would provide significantly broader geographic and party representation.

8. Conversely approximately 90%, or 304 seats, should be elected through FPTP. Majority government through FPTP seats would be unlikely, but not impossible. It would require winning 170 of 304 FPTP seats (or 56%) and would almost certainly mean that the percentage of votes necessary to do so would be closer to 50%. 90% FPTP and 10% MPR seats would also enable coalition governments to be composed of relatively few parties providing some measure of stability.

In summary, I recommend a Mixed Member Majoritarian system electing approximately 90% of MP's on the FPTP basis and 10% through some form of Mixed Proportional Representation that reflects the geography of Canada.

This would provide local representation and a measure of government stability along with substantial representation of the variety of political conviction across Canada.

Thank you for this opportunity