Special Committee on Electoral Reform

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, September 20, 2016

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Chair

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

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● (1310)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): We'll just be a couple of minutes. We're giving some attention to some technical details with the sound system. Do not adjust your screen.

The reason we're waiting a moment is that we want to make sure that all the comments are recorded so that we can create transcripts of the testimony and also so that we can record the comments of those in the audience who will be taking to the mike when we have our open mike segment of the meeting. It's important, but it should be just a matter of seconds, thanks to this very capable crew behind us here.

In the meantime, I'll just say what a pleasure it is to be back in your town of St-Pierre-Jolys. We had a very lovely bus ride from Winnipeg airport, and upon entering the town, we were very excited to be here. You have a lovely town. You can tell just riding through on a bus that it's a great place. Congratulations on the community you've built here.

I'd like to acknowledge, of course, Mayor Fallis, who is here today.

Thank you, Mayor Fallis, for giving us the use of your community centre and for arranging everything that needed to be done for us to hold this hearing today.

● (1315)

By way of introduction, we're on a cross-Canada tour for three weeks.

[*Translation*]

We started in Regina yesterday and we are in Manitoba today; we will be going to Winnipeg this evening for hearings. We will be going to the 10 provinces and the three territories in the next three weeks.

[*English*]

We'll be visiting every province and every territory over the course of about three weeks gathering citizen and stakeholder input that will be considered for the report that we'll be writing and publishing and tabling in the House of Commons on or before December 1. As you know, what brought us here is a campaign commitment, a platform commitment, of this government to move ahead on electoral reform before the next election.

The way that this is being done is the House of Commons, through a motion, established this 12-member committee on which all parties are represented.

[*Translation*]

It is also unusual for all parties in the House of Commons to have a place on this committee. Normally, committees are made up of members of parties that are officially recognized in the House. Places on committees are assigned according to the distribution in the House of Commons, so, with a government majority, members of the government party form the majority on each committee. However, for this committee, we have done things differently.

[*English*]

On this particular committee, even though we have a majority Liberal government in the House, there is no majority on this committee. There is no Liberal majority; there's not any other kind of majority. This is a different committee in that sense, and all parties are represented.

I would also mention that they have a lot of pressure. It's a high pressure job. I don't know if there's information available on paper that gives the committee's website address, but we can give that to you later. You can go to the website to obtain reference materials on electoral systems around the world. You can also access an online survey, a questionnaire that takes about 30 minutes to complete. I believe that so far, 4,000 Canadians have completed this questionnaire, or at least that was the figure that was given to me earlier today.

There's a part of the questionnaire that provides you with some basic information on electoral systems, and then once you've gone through that stage of the questionnaire, you go to the questions. It's a great way to learn a little about electoral reform. This brings me to another point, which is that the committee's role is like all parliamentary committees that travel, which is to gather citizen input on an issue, and in this case, it's electoral reform. Unlike other committees, we have a dual role, which is to reach out to Canadians to talk to them about electoral reform so we have, I guess, in a sense, a bit of a public education function. We have this dual role, in a way. We're here so that Canadians can be sensitized to the issue of electoral reform and be engaged with it.

● (1320)

Now, in addition to our work, in addition to the work we're doing, the Minister of Democratic Institutions is also consulting Canadians. Her consultation is separate from ours. It's being conducted in parallel.

In addition to those two tracks of consultation, the committee has asked all 338 members of Parliament to hold individual town halls. I had a town hall in my riding. My riding is in the western part of Montreal. It's called Lac-Saint-Louis. I did a town hall as a member of Parliament, not as a member of this committee, last Thursday. We're gathering input in many different ways in order to get a sense of where Canadians want us to go with this whole proposal of modifying the electoral system.

I think we'll get going. Even though at this point testimony will not be recorded verbatim, our analysts are taking copious notes. They have been sitting next to me for 26 meetings, and I can attest to the fact that it may not be through a recording device, but I think they're getting pretty much every word. So not to worry; your comments will be well recorded.

[*Translation*]

I also point out that our proceedings are in both official languages, of course. You have headsets so that you can hear the simultaneous interpretation.

[*English*]

The way we proceed is that each witness has five minutes to present their ideas and views on electoral reform. Then we have a round of questions where every member of the committee gets to engage with any of the witnesses they want to engage with for a total of five minutes. That includes questions and answers. It's not like the questions can be five minutes and then the answers come after. Both have to be within the five-minute slot.

We will start with Mr. Richard Kidd, who is here today testifying as an interested individual.

The floor is yours, Mr. Kidd, for five minutes, please.

A voice: It's 10 minutes.

The Chair: You're absolutely right. I apologize. My mistake. It's 10 minutes.

●(1325)

Mr. Richard Kidd (As an Individual): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting me.

I'm here to tell you about an original voting method I've invented called the "every vote counts" system, or EVC for short.

My goal in developing this was to repair two glaring defects of first past the post: many votes are wasted votes, and seat distributions don't correspond well to the popular vote, or, as I like to put it, seat counts don't match vote counts. We need to ensure some degree of PR, even if it's not exact.

I'll start by saying that losing votes aren't the only ones wasted under FPTP; so are many of the winning votes. All a candidate needs to win a constituency is one more vote than the closest competitor. Votes in excess of that don't really matter. They're wasted. The voters casting those ballots could have stayed home on election day without changing the results.

With this in mind, I separated winning votes into two types: instrumental, those necessary to elect a winner; and superfluous, the excess ones. I experimented with a mixed member system, using equal numbers of constituency and proportional seats, whereby the instrumental votes elect the constituency seats and the losing and superfluous votes together elect the proportional seats.

The results were stunning. In nine sample simulations of real elections, eight provincial and one federal, the seat shares earned by the different parties corresponded to popular vote percentages with amazing accuracy—not precisely, but close enough to represent fair outcomes.

So version one of EVC was born. The instrumental votes elect the constituency seats. Losing and superfluous votes are entered by party into a pool of votes called the proportionality pool, or PP for short. Proportional seats are awarded to each party according to its share of the pool. Adding the two kinds of seats gives each party's final seat total.

I published the details of all of this in a booklet I mailed to all of the members of the original committee. Many of them aren't here today. It's the one I am showing, with a white cover.

I thought I was finished, but it was not so. One loose end kept nagging me: the problem of practical implementation. It's a problem that plagues all mixed member systems, including MMP.

If EVC were used in Canada, we'd have to cut the present number of constituencies in half, from 338 to 169. This would make constituency reorganization a very difficult task. I worried about this for a long time before I came up with a viable solution. Before I explain it, I have to digress for a moment to discuss another innovation of EVC, the concept of the vote weight ratio.

In mixed member systems, including MMP, losing votes never have as much elective power as winning votes. It always takes more losing votes to elect a single seat. The vote weight ratio is a measure of the relative difference in voting weights.

Take MMP, for example. In a typical MMP election, the vote weight ratio tends to average around 3:1. It takes three times more losing votes than winning votes, on the left side of the ballot, to elect a single seat, so the winning votes have three times the weight of losing ones. That's surprising, I know, but it's true. In contrast, the vote weight ratio in EVC elections is always much better, often lower than 2:1.

●(1330)

As just one example, if the last federal election had used MMP with the two kinds of seats equal in number, the vote weight ratio would have been 3.03. Under EVC it would have been 1.76, which is much better.

Now, back to the main theme. One way of solving the constituency reorganization problem would be to include fewer proportional seats relative to constituency seats, say, two-thirds the number. That would allow more constituencies to be available for reorganization. In my brief, I suggested a split of 210 to 140 for Canada. That's a two-thirds ratio, for a total of 350 seats. That would be feasible. Reorganization would be much easier with 210 seats to work with instead of 169.

There is a drawback, however, to this two-thirds option. In a mixed member system like MMP or EVC, decreasing the number of proportional seats entails a rise in the vote weight ratio. That's because fewer proportional seats are available for the losing votes to elect, so their relative weight drops. If you attempt this two-thirds solution for MMP, the vote weight ratio jumps from an average of 3.0 to 4.0. That's 4:1, and that's unacceptable.

For an EVC simulation of the last federal election, the ratio jumps from 1.76, which was good, to 2.48, and that's not very good. So I had to find a way of bringing it back down again. The solution to this new problem lay in modifying a basic feature of EVC, the status of superfluous votes. If you thought my interpretation before was a bit fishy, you were probably right. You were right. I've argued that superfluous votes aren't necessary to the election of constituency winners, and that's true, but it's not the whole truth. If the voters who cast those ballots had stayed home, the result wouldn't have changed. That's true, but they didn't stay home. They went out and voted for the winners, thereby contributing indirectly to the results by not voting for the losing candidates. If they had, some of those losers might have won.

Superfluous votes therefore do count toward the election of the winners, not directly but indirectly, by withholding votes from other candidates. This creates another problem. Superfluous votes have a dual value. They help elect the winners indirectly, but they also directly elect some of the proportional seats. It wouldn't be fair to assign them that much voting power. So what to do?

The answer was to split the value of superfluous votes into two portions, one indirect and one direct. I did this by introducing a new variable into the EVC model, a quantity I called q. I don't have time to explain the details of this except to say that q is a decimal fraction less than one that is multiplied by the superfluous votes to reduce their contribution to the PP, and this is the direct portion of those votes.

How does this q solve the problem of high vote weight ratios under the two-thirds option? It's simple. Remember that losing and superfluous votes both elect some of the proportional seats. If the superfluous votes are lowered in value relative to the losing votes in the PP, losing votes get to elect a greater share of those seats than they did before. They gain weight and the ratio goes down. For example, using a suitable value of q can lower the ratio for the federal election I mentioned from 2.48 to 2.0, which isn't bad at all, so the vote weight problem is effectively solved, making the two-thirds option feasible for EVC.

By the way, no such solution exists for MMP, because it doesn't recognize superfluous votes.

That's the EVC system as it now stands, the version I summarized in my brief. I don't think voters would have any trouble understanding its basic operation. They wouldn't need to know all these details to grasp the idea that if their votes didn't elect a constituency winner or weren't really needed, they would count toward electing a proportional seat. EVC is really very easy to understand.

To conclude, EVC achieves its goal of ensuring that no votes are wasted—that's rather obvious—and seat counts closely reflect the popular vote. That's a matter for empirical investigation, and I assure you that it's true.

Note also that under EVC, local constituency representation is preserved; badly skewed election results never occur; shutouts never occur; small parties are treated equitably; slim majority governments, believe it or not, are sometimes possible with a minority of votes; vote weight ratios are fair; proportional seats can be filled on the basis of regional and other important criteria like ethnicity, gender, and professional expertise; and no specious vote transfer procedures are necessary for all voters to have their say in choosing their government.

Ladies and gentlemen, your committee faces a tough challenge in persuading Canadians to accept whatever electoral system you finally recommend. In my opinion, your chances of success will be far greater if you offer them a fair, effective, made-in-Canada system they can understand.

I'm confident that EVC would fill the bill. I think Canadians would take to it like ducks to water and I urge you consider it seriously.

Thank you for listening.

●(1335)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kidd. That was very interesting.

We'll go now to Professor Koop for 10 minutes.

●(1340)

Mr. Royce Koop (Associate Professor and Department Head, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba, As an Individual): I actually only have a five-minute presentation.

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Royce Koop: Thanks very much for having me in for the work that you're all doing on this obviously pretty important issue.

I'm a political scientist who studies politics in Canada primarily at the grassroots. This includes party organization in the constituencies, but more importantly, how members of Parliament represent the constituents in their ridings. My research over the last several years has involved shadowing MPs in their constituencies while they go about that task of being representatives, unfortunately not with anyone around the table today, though.

This research and experience has given me a deep appreciation of the role of constituencies and of community in shaping politics in this country, and especially the practice of representation. I want to spend my time today talking about local representation. I want to first talk about the centrality of local representation and service to politics in Canada, and then talk about the implications of this for the deliberations of the committee. There are other good things that electoral systems can help bring about, like gender equity, like proportionality, but I'd like to focus, given my own research, on local representation.

It's difficult to overemphasize the importance of local representation in a country both as expansive and diverse as Canada. Under the current electoral system, every citizen has a representative with some linkage to their local community, oftentimes very deep linkages, deep roots in their communities, and there's no doubt about who that representative is. Every Canadian has a direct local link to government, and their MPs arrive in Ottawa with distinctively local experiences that in sum reflect the diversity of the nation as a whole. Canadians expect their MPs to carry the unique views, needs, and concerns of their constituents from the communities of their ridings to Ottawa, and act upon them there.

MPs think that being attentive constituency MPs helps them get re-elected. We know from survey research that this is right. Canadians are generally dissatisfied with politics, but dig deeper and a paradox is revealed. Canadians are dissatisfied with the performance of politicians as a group, but oftentimes they're quite delighted by the performance of their own MP. How do we explain that? It may result from the representational work and the local visibility of MPs in their own riding, so this is a crucial and important part of democracy in Canada.

How does it impact on the deliberations of the committee? Local representation is often rightly seen as a strength of our current electoral system. Single member plurality, as the name suggests, organizes the country into relatively small ridings, gives each riding an MP, most of whom have a very strong link to the communities of the ridings. But other electoral systems also contain elements of local representation. A ranked ballot system, for example, would similarly preserve single member ridings in Canada. So, too, would MMP, a mixed member proportional system. This electoral system preserves constituencies and maintains constituency MPs, but it also adds list MPs, which brings about proportionality. If the committee wanted to maintain constituency representation, while also bringing about proportionality and all the good things that come with that, maybe the easiest way to do so would simply be to add 30 MPs who would be elected on party lists, while leaving all the constituency MPs alone. Cutting back the number of constituency MPs to make room for list MPs would hurt the quality of constituency representation.

STV, the single transferable vote, changes the nature of local representation by introducing ridings with multiple MPs. It doesn't necessarily hurt the quality of local representation, but it certainly does change it.

Ridings would tend to become quite large under STV. This was a consideration in the referendum campaign in British Columbia, after the citizens' assembly concern about ridings becoming larger. This is also a consideration for proportional representation systems, which would create problems for local representation as well.

In closing, I've seen the special representational bond built between MPs and their constituents in Canada. It's a bond that's nurtured by our current electoral system, the single member constituencies. I hope the committee would keep that relationship in mind when exploring alternatives to the current system or deciding to stick with the system as it is now.

Thank you very much.

● (1345)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Koop.

I will now proceed with the questioning, starting with Mr. Aldag for five minutes, please.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Thanks to both of our witnesses. I would also like to acknowledge the members of the public who have come out to join us today and I look forward to the open mike session that we'll be having later.

I'd like to say, Mr. Kidd, that it was fascinating to read through your material. The thought that you've put into it was very impressive. I'll tell you that the piece I liked about it is the simplicity of marking an X. I think that's something Canadians could go with. It's simple.

The concern underlying the question I had as I was reading through it, though, as it gets into the mathematical calculations and as you had to add pieces to deal with distortions, is that then you get into more and more complexity. I wonder whether at some time we reach a tipping point whereby we may lose Canadians' ability to go with a system that is so new and innovative. Will they actually go with it?

The question I have for you is simply concerning your process. Have you had a chance to talk to anybody about this, or is it a model that you've come up with that you are throwing out to us, such that we have to then figure out whether it would actually work as designed?

Mr. Richard Kidd: Well, I have talked to a few people about it, and often the reaction is the one that you just stated, that because of the.... I know there's a lot of mathematics in some of the documents, particularly this one, if any of you have read this one, in which there's a whole section on mathematical derivations.

I think it's a case of not seeing the forest for the trees. As you mentioned earlier, marking an X on the ballot, knowing that if your candidate doesn't win the seat your vote is going to count towards electing a proportional rep, is a very easy thing to understand. Voters can be told, for example, that there's going to be a slight reduction in the superfluous votes that are entered into the proportional pool and so forth, but they don't really have to know that. I think just knowing that their vote is not going to elect this guy and it's going to elect a party that they support...I think that's the important thing, and I don't think they have to know all those details.

So I don't think it's quite as bad as you make it sound. Most of the mathematics that I think you're referring to refer to the calculation of the q factor, which is a very complex thing, but you can keep that as simple as possible; I don't think it's really essential.

That's about all I can say. I think it is a simple system and an easy one to follow. There are complexities in it, but there are complexities in something such as.... Well, talk about complexities: who understands how STV works? Can someone explain this to me in five minutes? I don't think so. You know, there are quotas and everything else.

Mr. John Aldag: Professor Koop, thanks for your comments. They were a bit briefer than I would have liked; I think you had more there.

I'd like to go into some of the work that you've done. I'm fascinated with your research polling local MPs to see how they work. As a new member of Parliament, I could benefit from reading some of your work and maybe lessons learned. I'll be looking for some of your material.

When you look at some of the systems we've heard about where we have the two tiers of members of Parliament, and the proportional representation models where you have list MPs coming in, have you looked at any of that kind of thing? Where I'm going with it is a question of accountability. Do you think that Canadian constituents would have the same level of interest or support for these list MPs as they do with that direct relationship you get now between members of Parliament and their local representation?

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, there's no doubt that accountability is a real strength of our current system. People can very clearly see their votes have an effect in the riding. You get wasted votes, the phenomenon of wasted votes, but you can see if incumbent MPs get fewer votes than the challengers, they lose. It's that simple. It's transparent. It makes MPs accountable.

What you're referring to specifically is that under MMP you can have a party list. You can have list MPs. A government can go down to defeat. A party can get a terrible result in an election and yet list MPs can still win. If the party wins a certain proportion of the vote, they elect a proportion of list MPs.

I think if MMP was adopted in Canada, that would be a new experience for Canadians they haven't seen before. It would probably not be thrilling for them in terms of their sense of accountability in being able to hold politicians accountable.

Yes, it's a strength of the current system, for sure.

●(1350)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Reid for five minutes, please.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Kidd, if I could start with you, it looks to me, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, that you are trying to design a system that is relatively close to what we would normally think of as an MMP system. I think you were trying to correct the fact that in an MMP system in which 30% to 40% of the MPs are from the lists and the majority are from ridings, that way of structuring things will sometimes have a result that is not strictly proportionate. In the extreme situation, where one party wins half the votes but all the seats, you can only partly correct it when only 30% or 40% of the

seats in total are list seats. Is that a good way of summarizing it, or have I completely missed your point?

Mr. Richard Kidd: I'm afraid I didn't follow what you're saying. In the MMP system, normally, the way it's done in Germany and elsewhere, half the seats are constituency seats. The rest of the seats are not strictly proportional seats, but they are in a way because the votes on the right-hand side of the ballot, which go to determine what percentage of the total seats each party gets, determine the final share in terms of the percentage of votes that each party gets. That's how it works.

EVC doesn't work that way. EVC works by directly electing the proportional seats. That's the difference.

Mr. Scott Reid: For the problem you're describing, what I wanted to ask was that if you go to a system where half the seats are list seats as opposed to 30% or 40%, which is the number you've thrown out in your presentation—

Mr. Richard Kidd: When you say list seats, you're referring to proportional seats.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's right.

Mr. Richard Kidd: Okay.

Mr. Scott Reid: If half the seats are the list or non-geographic seats, then do you not eliminate the problem you're trying to address?

Mr. Richard Kidd: No. The problem I'm trying to address is that in first past the post, you have a party winning power, say, with 55% of the seats and only 39.5% of the vote. That's what I call disproportionate and not PR.

Mr. Scott Reid: Well, first past the post does that, but MMP would not have produced that result in the last election. It would have had a different seat count. It would have been more proportionate, depending on which model you use when—

●(1355)

Mr. Richard Kidd: Oh, absolutely it would have been more proportionate.

Isn't there a disadvantage to that, though? The Liberals won 39.5% of the vote in the last election. If you had run it by some kind of an MMP system and that was the percentage of votes that they would have deserved, then they would have had 39.5% of the seats. Isn't that right?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes. That was the point I was trying to make, actually.

Mr. Richard Kidd: Yes, they would.

One of the knocks I have on MMP, and I personally like the MMP system—I think EVC is better, but the MMP system is good.... I think if we had it in Canada, you would never get a majority government because you're not going to get any party, at least in the present political climate, that's going to reach the 50% mark in terms of the party vote side.

We're condemned to perpetual minority governments and not only that, you have to consider this business of vote weight ratio that I was talking about. If you tried to reduce the number of proportional seats, which is possible, you can cut it to two-thirds—they do in some South American countries that have 80% or 75% of the constituency seats—you raise the vote weight ratio and you make it much less fair. The final results are much less fair than they would be if it were fifty-fifty.

I think MMP has some flaws. You can't do that. You can't reduce the number of proportional seats to two-thirds easily without bad vote weight ratio, and also, you can't have a majority government. Under my system, you can have it; it's possible, but it's not easy, as anybody who has read my documents knows. However, you can do it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Reid: I have one last thing, if I could.

Mr. Kidd submitted the document to some of the members of the committee, but I wonder if he would be willing to leave one copy with the clerk.

Mr. Richard Kidd: Absolutely. I have extra copies.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): It's a pleasure to be here in this beautiful town. You have very fine baked goods. We all can confirm that, and that's important.

I represent a rural constituency in northern British Columbia, and questions of representation are very important to all of us. It looks different, depending on where you're standing in the country. My riding is a little bigger than Poland, so I take challenge to your comment, Mr. Koop, that we have relatively small ridings in this country. We have a bunch of relatively small ridings and then we have a whole bunch of massive ridings.

I want to perhaps leave you confident that one of the committee's guiding principles is direct representation. We are considering models and proposals right now that have to go through that lens. I don't think the committee has heard about too many models that have suggested wiping out direct representation, or not that I can recall. There's maybe been one or two, but certainly not the majority.

Mr. Kidd, thank you for the innovation. It's part of what we're doing here as well. There's a whole library of systems out there, but looking for a made-in-Canada solution is something we're very interested in.

Have you seen the Elections Manitoba study that is just out today, I believe? It will be good for the committee to look at this as well. They looked at the last Manitoba election. The turnout was 57%, I believe. They interviewed people who voted and people who didn't. Of those who didn't vote, 50% said they would vote if their votes counted and if all votes were treated equally. That's as opposed to some of the comments you've made.

Does that result from Elections Manitoba surprise, confirm...? What does it do for you?

I'll start with Professor Koop and then Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Royce Koop: They're finding that people would be more likely to vote if they thought their vote would count.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They talked to the non-voters and they were asked why they didn't vote. The two leading reasons were that some votes were seen as less valuable and that votes were not seen as counting; their effort wasn't counting.

Mr. Royce Koop: It's completely expected that under the electoral system we have there are psychological and mechanical effects that create disincentives for people to vote under certain conditions. If you live in a riding in which the Conservative is going to sweep it and you're an NDP supporter, what's the point of voting? It's not a big surprise at all, so some options for reform would address these sorts of things.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Do you have a system that you prefer?

You mentioned a few in your testimony. You said you were open to ranked ballot, AV, or MMP. Do you land on one side or another?

● (1400)

Mr. Royce Koop: Any system that produces proportionality would address that. If you feel you're not going to produce a wasted vote, then you're more likely to turn out to vote. Any sort of proportionality will lead to that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You fall into the proportionality camp?

Mr. Royce Koop: I don't feel it's my job to lecture MPs on this. I did have....

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You don't want to go there. Why not? Goodness, go ahead. We don't mind.

Mr. Royce Koop: You're quite right about the riding. I worked for the B.C. Citizens' Assembly and followed it afterwards. It was in those northern B.C. ridings where local representation was a huge issue to an extent that it wasn't in the Lower Mainland. People were perfectly fine combining three ridings together, whereas in your part of the province, it was a huge issue. Yes, it is something we should keep in mind.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I wonder if Mr. Kidd had a comment.

Mr. Richard Kidd: I welcome this question. Why don't people vote? There are two reasons. One is that their votes are going to be wasted losing votes because they reside in constituencies where their candidates can't win, and so their votes are going to be wasted losing votes, and two, they live in ridings where their candidates are going to win handily, so their votes are going to be wasted winning votes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Why bother?

Mr. Richard Kidd: This is exactly the problem, and this is exactly the problem that EVC solves because it eliminates the fact that losing votes and superfluous votes don't count. They all count in my system, and that's why I invented it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I don't want to challenge this too much, Professor Koop, but we heard some damning testimony about how important we are as members of Parliament, in the sense of why people voted for us. Many MPs think it's because of our sheer brilliance and good looks, but evidence shows us increasingly that party leaders, or parties themselves, or a brand are much more deterministic and have become increasingly powerful in why voters choose to put their vote behind one candidate or another.

Do you have evidence that counters that? If so, I'm sure our egos would love to hear it, because it's been quite a bashing at some of these meetings.

Mr. Royce Koop: It doesn't counter it, but it tempers it. What we know is that there are two measures. The number of volunteers in a local campaign and the amount of money that a campaign spends are both related to increased vote shares. In the end, local campaigns can affect about 5%, and they can increase by about 5%.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They can change the results, 5% one way or the other.

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, that's the maximum.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's not much.

Mr. Royce Koop: Look at the last election. A lot of seats were close calls, so candidates, if they can push that and they end up in a close race, it could have a big effect. The big thing is that candidates can do a lot to help themselves, and MPs, between elections, can help themselves as well.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Very good.

The Chair: I have a question on that, just for clarity. On the 5%, are you saying that in an election, 5% is attributable to the candidate, or are you saying a good campaign can change the candidate's vote by 5%? What I'm saying is, assuming the candidate's already popular, maybe their name is contributing 25% to the final result, but with a good campaign, a candidate can make it 30%. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Royce Koop: It's about 5%, yes, exactly. They can increase it by that amount. They can increase it by a lot more or a lot less, depending on the local circumstances, but that's about the upper limit.

If you look at the number of close races in recent Canadian elections, there were a lot of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ste-Marie, the floor is yours.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Thank you.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for coming to tell this committee what you think. Good afternoon also to my colleagues and to the entire team.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I would particularly like to recognize Ms. Sansoucy, who is joining us today, and those in the audience. We are really looking forward to hearing your comments. That will happen at the end of this meeting. It is our main reason for coming to see you. It is an honour for me to be here in St-Pierre-Jolys and to meet a francophone community in Manitoba. Good afternoon to you all; I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Mr. Kidd, Mr. Koop, your comments fit together in a way. My first question goes to Mr. Koop.

Mr. Kidd highlighted the need to reduce distortion. On several occasions, in fact, he said that the government had been elected with a majority, but with less than half of the votes cast, 39.5% actually.

In your opinion, should reforming the voting system reduce the distortion between the number of seats and the number of votes cast?

● (1405)

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, totally. Bringing in any kind of proportional system will reduce those distortions. Part of those distortions result from people not voting, and more people will turn out in a proportional system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: So you are in favour of some kind of proportionality in the reform.

Did I understand you correctly?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: Proportionality will have that effect, whether you get it under straight PR or under MMP. The system itself doesn't matter as much as the fact that you are getting proportionality. Yes, it will absolutely have that effect, definitely.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Okay. Thank you.

Now I have a question for Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Koop made a point that I feel my colleagues relate to, as I do. We have a direct link with our voters. An average constituency gives us 100,000 people to represent. It is quite a challenge for us to be able to go and see those people, stay in close contact with them and, in addition, to do all the work that has to be done in Ottawa and in committee.

The model that you are proposing would increase the size of constituencies.

Is there not a danger that we would lose that direct connection?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Kidd: Yes, if you change the size of the ridings, you would have to decrease the number of ridings so that they would increase in size. Obviously, that would make representing the wishes of your constituencies more difficult. However, don't forget that the proportional seats in my model.... At least I would suggest that they be distributed according to regional criteria so that they would all represent different regions and provinces. Those seats could take on responsibilities of local representation just as easily, I think, as people who are representing individual constituencies. It wouldn't be quite as direct a link, but if the work were done to make sure they did represent local constituencies, it could happen.

This is an aspect of the model that I haven't really worked on very much. I have been more concerned about the mathematical distribution of seats and so forth, rigging a system that will be proportional, or quasi-proportional, and have all the other benefits I mentioned. Your question could also be addressed to anyone who supports MMP, for example, because in MMP half the seats are also proportional. How is it done in Germany? How is it done in New Zealand? These are not new questions there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Okay, thank you. I have one final question for you.

Why would the party forming the government, with a majority of the seats but a minority of the votes, want to choose a reform such as yours, given that it would take away that majority and its power?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Kidd: They probably wouldn't. How do I know what the Liberals are thinking? Clearly, there is a problem. You know, I am a former professor, and I have talked to a few people in the faculty of education here who know a lot more about politics than I do.

I favour PR in some form, my form preferably; it's a good thing.

Some of these people who are well-versed in political ideas have said to me they like the idea of reform but are we always going to have governments that are not majority? That seems to me that if you have any kind of a pure PR system, that's going to result. That's inevitable. That's the real problem that you as a committee have to face. If you're going to have PR, you're going to have minority governments, let's face it. But under my system you could conceivably have a majority with a minority of votes. It does work.

● (1410)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam May.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you all for being here and thank you to the residents of St-Pierre-Jolys for joining us today. Thank you, retired Professor Kidd, for putting so much work into your proposal. I'm trying to ask a few more questions of Professor Koop first. I hope I'll have time to get to both of you.

I'm looking at some articles you wrote for the *Ottawa Citizen*. I wanted to pick up on one of the points you made in the article "No assembly required for electoral reform". I was interested in the observation there, and I'm hoping you remember it, of the notion of a referendum and the populist impulse it represents. You're quoting a professor from the University of Calgary, Rainer Knopff, in saying that it's one of twin threats to representative democracy. The other being strong party discipline.

I wonder if you could expand on that point, because there is a notion that somehow we must have a referendum. It comes up now and then. The question is in responsible government citizens elect members of Parliament and we're supposed to deliberate and within the sphere of things that Parliament can determine, we're supposed to decide them. I hadn't heard of Professor Knopff's theory, so I turn it to you.

Mr. Royce Koop: I didn't know I was going to be involved in this particular debate today. The argument being made there was that MPs are representatives who are elected to make decisions on behalf of citizens. It's an indirect democracy. MPs should be making decisions on things like electoral reform and other important matters that change the electoral context in Canada, like party finance reform. They should be doing that rather than turning it over to a citizens' assembly or even a referendum.

The broader argument being made there is that there is an accountability issue here as well. If a party makes a promise in an election campaign, they should keep the promise and if they don't, they should be held accountable for that in a subsequent election. They shouldn't be allowed to say they figured they were going to do this but now they're going to give it to a citizens' assembly or they're going to turn it into a referendum.

That's the heart of the argument that I was making there. I was mostly talking about citizens' assemblies, but that would apply just as well to the idea of holding a referendum.

Ms. Elizabeth May: The other article I had found that you had written flows entirely into what you said today about the value of that local connection and people would not like politicians as a group but like the work of individuals. You wrote pretty boldly here that the single member plurality, which we usually call here first past the post, is "a truly awful electoral system".

Is it fair to say from that if we can hang on to the local representation aspect so citizens don't lose that, the reform to a fair voting system, you would think from your studies that is healthy for democracy?

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes. That's seen as a hook into an article saying there are all these problems with first past the post, disproportionality, all the things that come out of that. For that reason, it's got some really awful elements to it. It's got one thing that's really great about it and that's local representation. I don't want to give away too much. MMP of course is a system. If you can get local representation and combine that with proportionality, that would be a great outcome.

The problem with MMP is that you don't want ridings to get too big. You don't want to take away constituency MPs to create list MPs. It creates this real conundrum. Do we add more MPs—Canadians don't really seem to like that idea—or do we replace constituency MPs with list MPs, thereby creating massive ridings that then hurt the quality of local representation?

As to your statement, yes, if we can get some of these other good things like proportionality while maintaining local representation, that would be absolutely wonderful.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I'm tempted to suggest that you work with Mr. Kidd and help promote his idea, and we can see how that goes.

Mr. Kidd, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think there's a unique aspect to what you're proposing for us today. You're the first witness I've heard and I think the first author I've seen address the issue that not only do the votes that go to a candidate who fails to win not count, but the votes you describe as superfluous votes don't count.

I've never actually put my mind to this notion that there are votes that aren't counted because you vote for the winner. The voter who votes for the candidate who wins, you really don't know if it was your vote that put them over the top or whether that vote was superfluous. You do feel general satisfaction with the election results to a higher degree than people whose votes didn't count because their candidate lost.

Has anyone else addressed this issue of excess winning votes?

● (1415)

Mr. Richard Kidd: No, I've never seen it. I'm no expert, but I've never seen it in anything that I've read. I think my interpretation in this regard is quite unique. In regard to what the superfluous votes are and what the instrumental votes are, it's quite a fascinating question. I explained my system to somebody once and they said, "Does that mean that the people who come in the morning elect the constituency winner and the people who come in the afternoon, their votes are superfluous?"

The answer to that question is no. The distinction between instrumental and superfluous votes is actually just a theoretical artifact, a construct, in a way. All the winning votes partake a little bit of being superfluous and some are instrumental. It's just that it's a theoretical model that allows you to make calculations.

I like to compare it to the model of the atom that you're taught in chemistry class in high school, atoms spinning around a nucleus like a miniature solar system. Quantum physicists don't interpret the atom that way any more; they do it on the basis of probability theory or something like that. That's probably not the way atoms really look, but it doesn't matter because that model of the atom allows us to do an infinite number of things with chemistry and so forth.

That's what this is like; it's a theoretical construct. You have instrumental and you have superfluous. But no, they're all together like that.

Do you follow what I'm saying?

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Thank you very much, gentlemen, for your presentations.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank the residents of the town of St-Pierre-Jolys for turning out in such large numbers.

[English]

Thank you so much for a warm welcome.

My question will be in English. Don't worry.

I was quite interested in reading—and it took me two times to read —your proposal, Professor Kidd, because I had to map out the math.

As you said, probably most Canadians don't need to know the mathematical formula for calculating q and so forth. We've been told that most Canadians don't want to look under the hood to know how things are calculated. From a voter perspective, it's simple because you're just putting the X. The calculation portion would be the Elections Canada officer having to create that formula to do the math.

One area of concern that we've heard is that most Canadians are not very open to the idea of adding more MPs to the plate. In your model, you mentioned increasing that to approximately 350, so 12 additional MPs to map it out.

In addition to that, you didn't mention in your brief if you preferred closed list versus open list. You had mentioned both but you didn't specify.

Now, the flip side, Professor Koop.... This is a great joint presentation. Given the fact that local representation is so important to Canadians and it is one of the guiding principles, if we were to adopt a model similar to Professor Kidd's model, what would you recommend in terms of those proportional seats? You've done a lot of work with local representation. What would you recommend? If we were to do it by region, for instance the area of Montreal, the people who would be on the proportional list probably live close to the urban centre. If they were selected, you would have a whole bunch of MPs in that riding, but further north of Montreal or south of Montreal, you wouldn't have them. Also, how would that work in terms of representation, the parachuted candidates and so on? Could you elaborate?

Mr. Royce Koop: I didn't read your proposal, so I'm not totally sure about it, but I can respond in terms of MMP. The question is, how you would actually elect the list MPs. Is it by province or by region? I'm not sure.

We do see situations where, if you have a region, you get a lot of candidates, say, from the urban part of the province or from the city. Parties usually have a vested interest in preventing that from happening, because it creates an opportunity for other parties to elect list candidates from the other parts of the province. So parties sometimes solve that issue on their own.

On the actual unit of election for list MPs, what we see in practice with list MPs is that they're less interested in geography than constituency MPs are. They take on different representational concerns, different foci representations. A lot of women list MPs see it as their job to represent the interests of women. People from certain groups take these different, non-geographically defined interests as the groups of people they would represent. This happens no matter what you use, province or region, and it's what we would probably expect to see in Canada as well if we had these kinds of list MPs being elected alongside constituency MPs.

● (1420)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'll let Professor Kidd answer and then I have one quick question.

Mr. Richard Kidd: On the question of open and closed lists, I personally favour closed lists, because if the parties get to choose who is going to be representing the proportional seats, they can make sure they're balanced ethnically, gender-wise, and even according to other criteria like professional expertise, and so forth. If you make open lists, then who knows who the people who are voting will put in there. There may not be any ethnic representation. I like the closed list; I do prefer that. I know Fair Vote Canada has said they like open lists, but I don't know.

Also, I should say that if the proportional seats are assigned regionally, then you wouldn't need a long list for Canada. All you would have to do is make sure that within each region, and this is if you had closed lists, you could have closed lists for each party so the people would know who they were voting for.

If you have open lists and they have to choose among them, then you're complicating the ballot. I like the X ballot, but if you want to have a right-hand side where they get to choose anybody who happened to win a proportional seat, that's your choice. Maybe you could do that, but that's complicating the ballot.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Rayes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I echo my colleagues in thanking the witnesses for joining us today.

My first question goes to Mr. Koop. You talked about the importance of local representation. I am one of those who believes in that deeply; it is a priority for the public. I have actually asked people that question and most, if not all, would like to be able to vote for their member of Parliament.

Personally, I am very concerned about any other voting system. I feel that you highlighted it well in your remarks. You say that you would be in favour of a proportional system if it could protect local representation. However, to achieve that, according to what all the experts tell us, we would have to substantially increase the number of members of Parliament. My constituency contains 40 municipalities. It takes me an hour and a half to drive from one end to the other. I cannot imagine having a larger territory to cover and being able to serve my fellow citizens equally well.

So, in the best of all worlds, do you know of a model that would allow that? Mr. Kidd seems to have presented one, but do you know of another one?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: You've identified the central challenge of this. How do you get proportionality while maintaining local representation if you're not willing to add more members of Parliament? That's the unavoidable solution. I said, for example, to just add a bunch of list MPs, but don't take away constituency MPs, and that's the answer. If people don't want to add more MPs, more politicians, then you have to make one choice or the other. It's going to be really hard to get those two outcomes at the same time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: My understanding is that, to get to the mixed-member proportional system as you see it, without sacrificing representation, you would automatically have to substantially increase the number of members in order to keep that close relationship. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: I don't know about many more MPs. The more list MPs you have, the more proportional outcomes you'll get, but that's a choice that can be made. It doesn't have to be perfect proportionality. If you have a certain number of list MPs, you're going to get more proportional outcomes. I'm not sure of the exact proportion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you.

My second question is for you too. If I am not mistaken, you are saying that any proportional system would increase the participation rate of those voting in an election. Last March 12, in Parliament in Ottawa, I attended a presentation by Professor André Blais, an expert in voting systems at the Université de Montréal. He was with Antonia Maioni, from McGill University. He answered a question from the audience about whether proportional voting would lead to a higher rate of participation.

The answer that he gave, based on a number of analyses he has conducted from around the world, is that there is not really a direct effect on the voting percentage, plus or minus 3%. So it may even go down. He talked about New Zealand, where there has been a drop of 10% since a system of that kind was put in place. He said no, the effect of that model is often to increase the number of parties and to reduce the participation rate. This is not my position; here is what he said: "Studies show that the proportional model has no effect in increasing the voting rate among minorities in the way that the Liberals would like to change the trend. Generally, however—and, it is true, we see it in comments from the public—the word proportional inspires confidence in people and is perceived as more equitable."

Do you have any documents, studies or research that you have done and that you could provide to us, to confirm your statement that any proportional method that we might put in place would increase the participation rate?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: There are two ways you can address this question of turnout. First, you can compare a turnout between proportional systems with what we have with non-proportional systems. What you see is that turnout tends to be higher in proportional systems. That is there. That doesn't necessarily mean that if Canada moves from a non-proportional to a proportional system, then we'll get a higher turnout. It's highly suggestive of that.

The problem with looking at it is that not many countries have gone from a non-proportional to a proportional system. The number of cases is fairly low, so it's hard to make that case. I'm comfortable saying there's probably a high likelihood that if we moved to a PR system, over time our turnout rate would increase. There are good theoretical reasons for thinking that.

You are right; people are not atoms. Voters are not atoms. We can't predict with certainty what they're going to do, but I think there are good theoretical reasons for thinking that turnout would increase if we moved to a proportional system.

●(1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I was asking if you have any documentation or research that confirms your perception.

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: Do you mean that turnout tends to be higher under a proportional system? Yes, I could find that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Is it possible for you to send that to the committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, definitely.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. DeCourcey, you have the floor.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): My thanks to our witnesses.

On behalf of my fellow Acadians in New Brunswick, I thank everyone in this small community for the opportunity to visit you today.

[*English*]

I want to start with Professor Koop on this idea of local representation. Do you have any study data evidence to suggest what might be an ideal number of constituents or electors a representative could effectively represent?

Mr. Royce Koop: No, I'm not aware of any studies like that. It could be done. You could test people's satisfaction with democracy based on the size of the riding. I could look for those riding statistics, but I'm not familiar with them.

It's also not just a single question, of course. There is also this question of equity built into it for some citizens and for their representatives, as well. If you live in a rural riding in Canada that has just about the same number of people as an urban riding but which is huge, the quality of representation must suffer. Your MP is going to be less accessible. It's harder to get in touch with your MP. It's harder for the MP to get in touch with you. They have to travel around to learn about the needs and preferences of the constituents.

It's hard to say an exact number, but what we can say is that it will get worse as the constituency gets bigger or it gets more populous.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: I can feel that rather acutely in the riding I represent, which is not even close to comparable to the size of the riding that Nathan has to represent.

We touched a little on the relative merits and drawbacks of the current system, MMP. I wonder if you could share your thoughts on what the alternative vote might offer Canadians.

●(1430)

Mr. Royce Koop: The alternative vote doesn't really affect what I was talking about with local representation. There would certainly be a local representative. That would be preserved, so it would be a real plus of the alternative vote as well.

We would perhaps see that people feel like they have more input into the choice. Because of the ranking nature of the ballot, more votes are included in the overall result. We might see increased democratic satisfaction as a result of that, but beyond that I am not sure. It wouldn't be a huge change. It is a relatively innocuous change to the electoral system compared to some of the other alternatives that we are talking about today.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Before I end this conversation about local representation, would it be fair to say that there is an element of the local representative affecting the way someone goes to the polls to cast a vote, but perhaps what you are touching on more is the political culture that exists right now, where constituents, after the election, expect to have someone to hold accountable vis-à-vis their relationship to Parliament or to government? Is that an equally important aspect of the conversation we are having right now?

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, sure. It is certainly part of the political culture in Canada that you have a local MP. You know who your MP is. There is one of them. They are defined on the basis of geography. You have your storefront constituency office, and if you have problems, you can go to that MP and have them dealt with, hopefully. MPs show up at local events and functions. This is all built into the experience of politics in Canada, and it would certainly be changed by electoral systems that either get rid of single member constituencies or create multi-member constituencies. Yes, definitely.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Mr. Kidd, I was listening to the conversation between you and Mr. Reid. I understand that what your system, in your view, resolves, which is not resolved under the current system and also causes issue under MMP, is the idea of vote weight ratio.

Mr. Richard Kidd: Yes.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: I am not sure whether I have heard that directly spoken about so far—maybe in a glancing way by others—but can you, in 30 seconds, give me the elevator pitch on exactly what you are resolving with this idea of figuring out the right vote weight ratio?

The Chair: Please be very brief, Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Richard Kidd: Okay.

We want all votes to be equal in value, but in mixed member systems they aren't, because the losing votes don't have as much weight as the winning votes. In MMP, the vote weight ratio tends to be about 3:1. In my system, it is lower. It can be made 2:1 or even better. The only system in which you are going to get exact equality among all votes is PR, where everybody's vote counts and there is no local representation. It works that way.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Richard Kidd: I would like to explain it to you more.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Welcome to the committee, Ms. Sansoucy. It is a pleasure to see you here with us today.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am going to use my first comment to express my respect for my colleagues and the team that is accompanying them on this tour to meet Canadians in every province and territory.

I would also like to say hello to those for whom this is home. Coming here is always a pleasure for a francophone from Quebec. On the bus from the airport, we passed through a number of communities with francophone names. It is a pleasure to meet you.

I would like to thank the two witnesses for their contributions.

Mr. Kidd, I have to tell you that I was very impressed by the work you have done in developing a model like this. Thank you for your contribution to the improvement of the voting system.

I would like to take advantage of the fact that I have two generations of university professors before me. We can sense their desire to improve the voting system in both their presentations.

For 60 years, governments have been elected using different voting systems. One thing strikes me. Those governments have the firm conviction that they represent the people and that they are there to work to serve them better. We also see that in the way our committee is working.

I would like to take advantage of your professorial expertise and ask you to talk to us about the democratic principles that drive you and that led you to testify today.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Kidd: Thank you for recognizing my academic credentials, but I'm not a political scientist, just a regular citizen.

For a long time I've been concerned that the FPTP system is unfair. It produces distorted government representation. I sat down one day and I started thinking about how to make it better, and that's why I developed my own system.

No, it's not a professional thing that's drawing me to this; it's just a feeling that we can have a better democracy in Canada.

Mr. Royce Koop: It would become my job to think about these things and to teach about them.

Like a lot of people, I am concerned about Canadians' attitudes toward democracy, views towards democracy, and disenchantment with democracy. I can see some pathologies over the electoral system bear some responsibility for that. At the same time, they can be blamed unfairly for some of those attitudes.

That's what drives my interest in this issue, this feeling of democratic disengagement and unhappiness among Canadians and how might we fix that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: When it comes to changing the voting system, there is a resistance to change and that gives rise to fear. One of the characteristics of governments elected by a proportional voting system is that they are very unstable. That is one of the arguments against changing our voting system. The feeling is that the change will create instability. What is your opinion about what a change in the voting system might mean for us in terms of stability?

[*English*]

Mr. Royce Koop: It's an undeniable strength of the current electoral system that it does lead to stability. The distortions we all criticize tend to lead to majority governments, and so we get majority governments that last for so many years. Some people see that as a strength. I'm not that concerned about minority governments or coalition governments for the most part, but that's a strength people identify of the current system.

Do you want to add anything?

Mr. Richard Kidd: Just to say it's important that whatever government represents the people, the policies they bring in should be supported by the majority of the people, and that doesn't happen.

You have 40% of the vote and government with 100% of the power, so they can do whatever they want. This is not a democracy.

We want fair legislation that the people will support. You put in a government and they are no longer going to necessarily bring that legislation in. Of course, you can vote them out later, but you can garner damage along the way, too.

That's all. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sansoucy.

We now move to Mr. Maguire.

● (1440)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the panellists as well, thank you.

Mr. Koop, you made several comments about centrality of voting systems, how present processes provide accountability in the constituencies for members of Parliament of all parties, and I think, Mr. Kidd, you referred to that as well.

We've had a lot of presentations. I've only been on this committee for a couple of days, but I've read some of the others that have allowed for a great deal of change and opportunity in some of these areas, but there is no consensus around what forms the best electoral process perhaps at that point. I may have my own opinions, but that's what we're hearing.

I'm wondering if you can provide us with details around what you were thinking of in regard to some of the trade-offs of making the changes you've talked about and others have talked about, from where we are today.

Mr. Royce Koop: Electoral reform is all about those kinds of trade-offs. It's about competing values and having to make choices between them, so we hear about some of the strengths of SMP. Local representation is the big one that I emphasize, but proportionality with some of the good things attached to that is an equally worthy goal to pursue. That's why I'm glad I'm not sitting on the committee. I just get to talk and give my perspective. You're right; it's absolutely a case of competing values and trying to find places where you can actually reconcile those values, and it's a tough thing to do.

Mr. Richard Kidd: It's a very good question you asked.

No system is perfect. If we could find a perfect system, every country in the world would be using it right now. All systems have their pluses and their minuses, and the big challenge that's facing you is to try to figure out a system where the pluses outweigh the minuses, or they do the things that you want them to do.

Take first past the post: strong, stable government, local representation, great. Disproportionate? No. Well, you know you give up one thing.

If you use tier PR or list PR, you get perfect representation, all votes count the same and everything, but you don't have any local representation.

I could go on and on. There is a whole list of different things that you want. You have to balance it.

I hate to keep plugging my system, but if anybody has ever read this white document, you'll see near the end of it there's a report card for EVC in which I list from A+ down to B, the lowest rating. I don't know if anybody ever read it, but I think it's a good system because it does have a lot of pluses and not any minuses that I can really think of, except for the problem of expanding constituency size, and if you're going to have a mixed member system, you're going to have to do that, unless you want 500 seats.

You have to balance. It's a question of balance.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Okay, my question as a follow up to that is what should that balance be. We have 338 seats. We just increased the House by 30 seats. It's been a while since that happened, so it caught up because of our increased population in the country. But that just happened, so now you're looking at what additional seats you would have and how many you would cut back on. That was one of the questions earlier. Is it 30%? You're talking about 50%.

Mr. Richard Kidd: No, I suggested a 356-seat Parliament with 210 constituencies and 140 proportional seats. That's a two-thirds ratio, and that would certainly increase the size of the constituencies, but it wouldn't be as bad as if you had to cut them in half.

I sympathize with representatives who have huge ridings to represent, like Nathan and a few others, Matt also. I sympathize with them, but if you're going to have a mixed member system, that's going to be inevitable.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Maguire.

I'll go to Ms. Sahota to close the round.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you for being with us today and for your interesting presentations.

I'd like to start with Professor Koop. You said you shadowed a whole bunch of MPs. You don't have to name those MPs. I'm more interested in knowing what regions of the country they represented, what the sizes of their constituencies were like, and what the general demographic was like.

Mr. Royce Koop: We got diversity on all of those things: in rural/urban ridings; in dense versus dispersed ridings; MPs who have been around for 20 years versus first-term MPs; MPs in safe party seats versus MPs in competitive seats. There were 11 in total, and we aimed to get diversity on all those different kinds of scales.

●(1445)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I didn't realize that you went to that length. I thought that maybe you just shadowed a couple of MPs. It's good to know you have that perspective.

Are there any insights you could give us as to the different types of representation that were needed for the different types of ridings, depending on those factors you listed?

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes, MPs develop different kinds of what we call representational styles. Some are very policy focused; some are service focused. Some are focused on what we refer to as symbolism, going to local events, community events, trying to present themselves as one of their constituents, trying to build a personal bond with those constituents. They develop these styles in response, in part, to what they think their constituents actually expect of them, and so that factors into the nature of the riding itself.

There are other things that go into that as well, for example, how vulnerable does the MP actually feel in the re-election contest that's coming up? We'll have a book coming out from UBC Press pretty soon—not to advertise or anything—where we go into detail on all of these MPs.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: That's really fascinating to me, being a new MP and trying to figure it out, just like my colleague was saying, and how to best represent constituents is really important to us.

Did you find that there was a difference in the demand levels that were placed on some MPs in certain ridings versus others?

Mr. Royce Koop: Yes. The demands that are placed on MPs in dense urban ridings are a lot higher than those on MPs in other kinds of ridings.

In rural ridings they have a medium number of demands, of service requests from constituents. The suburban ridings, where MPs tend to get an easier ride, are not as demanding. It's not as pressing. There are not the kinds of service requests that MPs, especially in the really dense urban, high-rise kinds of ridings get. Those are the ones that impose really pressing demands on the MP.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Interesting. Because constituents are important we're trying to figure out, depending on which system we use, how large would you grow the riding and would the constituency MP be able to serve their members appropriately? It seems like the larger rural ridings don't have that same demand, anyway, so that's interesting.

I'd say that my riding keeps me very busy and on my toes all the time. I've met with a few different political science professors, and they said that ridings with huge minority populations tend to really rely on local representation and their MP perhaps disproportionately relative to other MPs in non-minority-heavy ridings.

In some things I've been reading I've also found that the current system has created smaller ridings, and that has allowed for minorities to actually do well with the sizes of those ridings, and get to elected because there are densely concentrated minority populations. That has given them an advantage, under the current system, to get the number of seats that we have currently. I found that interesting.

In moving to one of these other systems—and I would hope that parties are all moving in that direction, anyway, even if we ballooned the size of the riding, perhaps we would lose those minority representatives to actually win constituency seats, but maybe through the list representation it's my hope that we would put them back in.

You made an interesting statement about list MPs tending to support certain causes, certain other interests, and not necessarily those attached to a riding. That fascinates me a little bit, too, because I'm finding that this balance of being an MP, being able to maybe have something you want to achieve in Parliament but at the same time having a balance with the interests of your constituents, is really important and keeps you in a balanced perspective. You not only want to achieve your goals, but you want to make sure that everyone's voice is heard. I think those are good things that come out of our system, and those are things we wouldn't want to lose.

The Chair: Time is up, unfortunately.

● (1450)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I found these presentations really interesting. It's given me a lot to think about, so thank you for that. I'm looking forward to reading your further submissions, if you have any. Thank you.

The Chair: I would concur, it's been very interesting. We had someone last night who was referring to a counting system, a system for counting votes, but I think, Mr. Kidd, yours is the first presentation we've heard from someone with an original model for us to consider outside, not fully outside, but somewhat outside the realm of the typical models that we hear about over and over. It was very interesting, and we're really glad you were able to come to committee.

Dr. Koop, it was really interesting to learn about the research you're doing. I hadn't heard of it. As Ms. Sahota said, it should be very interesting to read what comes out in your book. It will be interesting to see how you see our role as MPs and so forth, so thank you again.

We'll take a five-minute break and we'll come back with the next set of witnesses, and then we'll of course have our open mike session afterwards.

Thank you again.

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● (1500)

The Chair: If everyone could take their seats, we'll get started with this second session.

We have with us Professor Bryan Schwartz, a law professor at the University of Manitoba. We have Gina Smoke, who is a national representative for Unifor, and Darren Gibson, who is the coordinator of political action membership mobilization for Unifor.

I assume you caught part of the last group that appeared. The way it works is that each of you would have five minutes to present and then there will be a round of questions. Each member gets five minutes to engage with the witnesses, which means both questions and answers within five minutes.

We'll start with Professor Schwartz, for five minutes.

● (1505)

Professor Bryan Schwartz (Law Professor, University of Manitoba, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I'm a law professor at the University of Manitoba. I currently hold an endowed chair in international business and trade law. I've been doing that and practising law for about 35 years now. In the course of that, I did about 10 books on constitutional reform and institutional reform. There are two works that you might be interested in. One is "Valuing Canadians". This is a study that I did for the Law Commission of Canada in 2003. The basic thrust of it was that it also ended up being recommended by the Law Commission of Canada in 2004.

I understand that part of the mandate is electronic voting. I did a study on that for the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada in 2013.

Both of these are available for free online, in both official languages. If anybody wants me to send them a copy, I'd be happy to.

What were the thrusts of the studies? "Valuing Canadians" argued that you could establish a reasonably objective framework for evaluating proposals. Now, it's absolutely true that there's no such thing as a perfect system; there are always trade-offs. The methodology with *Valuing Canadians* was to try to draw on international bodies and think tanks and see if we could identify some criteria that just about everybody would agree on. Then it was to evaluate five families of systems and make some recommendations. The analysis was intended to be objective.

The recommendations in "Valuing Canadians" concluded that the opinion was that there are two strong candidates: PR light, a very modest form of proportional representation adding to the existing system, or the first-past-the-post system. There was probably a slight nod in "Valuing Canadians" to PR light.

I can't summarize the conclusions on electronic voting in a few words, other than to say be very careful about cybersecurity. Electronic voting sounds great. I thought it sounded great—I was an enthusiast—but the more I looked at it, the more I was concerned about the implications to our democracy of cybersecurity issues and tampering.

I'm very grateful to have been invited here, because it's caused me to think about what I have thought since then. I have a couple of thoughts.

Things are not like they were in 2003: a couple of things have happened. One is, there have been proposals to do voting system reform in a whole lot of places, but none of them have gone forward. Now you might say there are systemic obstacles, but maybe there are some good reasons why they didn't go forward. We should think about that. Second, there isn't the same appetite, because a lot of the dysfunctions of 2003-04 have somehow been mitigated.

You think back to the era of people like me saying we have to do something, but a lot of the problems are less than they used to be. I'm thinking that parties adapted and voters adapted. Places that never had alternation have had alternation, for example, the permanent rule of the Conservative Party in Alberta.

We just had a regime change in my own province, Manitoba. The idea of the permanent government seems to have been mitigated. We don't have regional protest parties—the Reform or the Bloc, no puns intended. But voters have decided that they wanted to go more for national-oriented parties. So maybe, instead of changing the system to some extent, we adapted to it and have actually found within the system things that mitigate some of its worst features.

I have just one other thought, if I even have time for that.

Instinctively, when I think back on writing this book, I think now that, whatever rubric you put it under, I have to say after being an independent-spirited viewer of politics for 35 years, alternation is very valuable and very important, in my view. We tend to think, in real time, about everybody getting a piece of influence, right—the minority parties having a say—and that's important, but think about, through times, whether it is important that different parties assume office serially, that different teams get a turn to actually lead. I think that's an underestimated virtue of any political system, that different parties get a term. I can elaborate on why I think that's important. I think there are many objective and fundamental reasons why it's not only about voices for everyone while somebody's in charge. It's that different teams get a turn at being in charge.

I hope I didn't exceed my five minutes, but those are my thoughts.

● (1510)

The Chair: That's perfect.

We'll go now to Mr. Gibson, for five minutes.

Mr. Darren Gibson (Coordinator, Political Action Membership Mobilization, Unifor): Hi. My name is Darren Gibson. I'm the father of three girls, ages 4, 8, and 11. I live in Winnipeg in the riding of Elmwood—Transcona. I'm a union activist with a keen interest in political action and hold the elected position of Unifor political action chairperson. This work includes education, working on social and community issues, campaigns and solidarity, and participating in

elections at all levels. In Unifor, we see all these components as part of our democratic engagement, and I wanted to share some thoughts with you today.

I'm here today because I believe electoral reform is the single most important issue to be addressed in Canadian democracy. If you, our elected representatives, fail to take this opportunity, it will be a long time before these conditions come around again.

I'm here to tell you that our membership is ready for change and expects me to lead that change.

Canada is one of the only western democracies still using first past the post. It's the same system we used in 1867 when we only had two political parties and a lot of people didn't have the right to vote.

One of the flaws with first past the post is that every vote does not count. In 2011, the Conservatives formed a majority government with 39% of the vote. Last fall, the Liberals were elected to a majority, but again the party only received 39%. No matter how you do the math, less than 40% does not equal a majority. Yet in our current voting system, that's exactly the result.

We need to adopt a fair system in which every vote counts, where there is equality in the vote, and ensure that every region has local representation. We want fewer reasons to vote strategically and more opportunity to vote for a hopeful progressive future. We want more reasons for young people and all those who have been alienated from politics to engage and participate.

A second flaw with first past the post is inequality in the electorate. Electoral reform is an equality issue. Under Canada's current voting system, every vote does not count. Every vote is not represented, and consequently, many people are choosing not to participate.

The largest demographics of those not participating in elections include young people, women, people of colour, and aboriginal people. The voices and needs of equity-seeking groups are vital to a strong democratic government. They are essential for true democracy.

There was a lot of talk about gender equality during the 2015 election. Now MPs have the opportunity to walk the walk by supporting Kennedy Stewart's private member's bill, Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act. The bill is based on laws in other countries that have elected more women to office. It links political subsidies for political parties to gender equity measures and gives incentives to parties to run more women candidates, which will in turn move us towards gender parity in the House of Commons.

Our national convention in August of this year overwhelmingly endorsed electoral reform as a proportional system that allocates seats in our Parliament in a way that gives weight to every vote.

Unifor has deliberately avoided focusing on a detailed model to replace first past the post. However, we expect this all-party committee to reach a majority consensus and to recommend a proportional system that is understandable and explainable to our members and the community.

In our view, you have all the information on voting systems that is needed to fulfill our aspirations. We did not want to allow your partisan concerns to block a majority. We did not want a referendum or another process that would make proportional voting impossible at the next election.

In our view, the people of Canada spoke decisively at the federal election by electing a large majority of MPs who stated clearly that they were committed to electoral reform. Prime Minister Trudeau stated in the federal campaign that 2015 would be the last election under the current system. During the same campaign, when I was volunteering at numerous campaign offices in Winnipeg in the ridings of Elmwood—Transcona, Winnipeg Centre, and Kildonan—St. Paul and going door to door talking to voters, I understood that this promise must be upheld. The voters were discouraged. They weren't voting for their parties, who they felt would never win, or they simply weren't voting at all.

We're calling for a new electoral system in which we maintain a local representative, in which every vote counts, and in which our politicians are elected proportionally to the votes they receive.

Thank you for allowing me this honour of addressing the committee this afternoon.

●(1515)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gibson.

We'll go now to Ms. Smoke.

Ms. Gina Smoke (National Representative, Unifor): Hi. My name is Gina Smoke. I'm a Unifor representative and of aboriginal descent. I'm here on behalf, I guess, of both Unifor and the aboriginal community.

I grew up on a reserve knowing what it's like to be a minority, having difficulties in trying to vote, and still seeing the same thing happening within our communities. I did not grow up being a political person. I think it was my mother who really pushed a lot of this upon me, learning how to put up a fight for our rights.

I, like Darren, worked in the various elections, and it was the first time for me to be out there knocking on doors. I worked in some of the lower-income, tougher areas of Winnipeg. The one thing I realized there is that we share a lot of similar issues when it comes to voting: not feeling that our votes counted, people not wanting to come out because of that feeling that they were under-represented. It took a lot of work explaining where I came from and how I felt about being out there and casting our own ballots.

I learned various things about how government works, not just provincially and federally, but on reserve. I grew up on one reserve with a hereditary chief and married into one that was electoral and so elected. The things that I see in getting involved with unions and learning about local executives and unions is that everybody wants the same thing: for our voices to be heard, to feel represented, no matter who you are.

I became president of my local within CTV. I was there for 19 years, and it took me a long time to stand up and want to put my voice forward. Part of it is that I have two kids of my own; I raised them by myself. You want them to have the same voice as everybody else and not go through the same things that I did on the reserve.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of changes that need to be made. Because of all these things that I've been through myself, I learned when I was the president of my local that every department within our company needed a voice, because they felt that if it was all for one department, nobody was going to care about the needs of that department. As the president, I made sure that our committees were made up from separate departments, and when we went to bargaining, it was the same thing.

I'm probably way more simplistic than some of these complicated analyses and everything. I think the government should be made up of equal voices within the government; that we shouldn't have majorities; that we should be able to all work together to get our voices out there. It's so basic to me. It's too complicated for nothing.

I think they need to make it much easier for the aboriginal communities, especially the northern ones; it's way harder for them to get out to vote. Why do we have to make it so complicated? We know who they are in these communities. Why do we have to come up with all these...? There are a lot of elders who can't speak English or read English. They don't drive, so why would they have a driver's licence? It's the same even in the community I grew up in, and it's not that far from here.

I just think there has to be a better way, and we all need to work together to make it happen.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony and insight.

Mr. Aldag will start the round, please, for five minutes.

● (1520)

Mr. John Aldag: Thanks to our witnesses, and welcome to the panel we have today. I'd like to thank the Unifor presenters for the work you do in the electoral systems. It's great to see the involvement. I have had the opportunity to meet with many of your members in my time as a member of Parliament. Congratulations on your continued work in this important area.

I'm going to begin with some comments for Professor Schwartz.

On the bus this morning I was able to read through "Valuing Canadians", the document. I'm not an expert on the content, but there's some really great material in there. I'd actually like to start by seeing if you would be willing to officially submit it to our committee, and that way we'd have it to draw from. I think there's some great information there.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: Yes, I have copies in my trunk for everyone. I just didn't know what the official process was in terms of page limits and official submissions.

By the way, it's "*Valoriser les Canadiens*" on the other side.

Mr. John Aldag: Wonderful. With that, there are a couple of things.

One of the themes I've taken to the town halls I've done, and to the witnesses who come before our committee, is to take a step back and talk about values, and which values should be guiding us moving forward. I was really impressed to see that you drew on some information in the report on Canadian values. I think it was related to some constitutional work. Then we're able to take electoral reform principles and apply those to the values. There's some great material that I think can guide us moving forward.

The first question I have is this, and you started talking about this in your comments. Is the report still valid? There have been some changes in society, but in the recommendations you made, I think that PR light is really the preferred version that you put out there. Would you say that's still a valid recommendation?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: I would set the framework of analysis of identifying these things. In retrospect, the one thing I would add is, however you fit it in, the point I tried to make in my opening, which is the importance of alternation among different parties through time. The second point is on what has caused me to rethink. I haven't come to definitive conclusions on everything. I'd want to do the same exercise before I came down definitively on anything. One of my books on constitutional reform is called *Still Thinking*.

What's fresh fodder for analysis? One is that the reform movement didn't happen. It was studied in Quebec. It was studied in B.C., put to a referendum. It was studied in Ontario, put to a referendum and lost. P.E.I. is currently considering it.

By the way, another question I can answer is on what I think about plebiscites. The answer is I think they're necessary in order to do this reform.

Sorry?

Mr. John Aldag: I didn't hear if you said they are or aren't.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: They are, in my view. They're a moral necessity. They're not a legal necessity, but they're a moral necessity in my view.

That's something that's changed, too, in terms of the extent to which plebiscites have become common in the British Canadian tradition in terms of approving fundamental reform.

I asked myself, why didn't it happen? My view, again, is we should be thinking about it from an Olympian view. What's a system that will last a century or two? All of us tend to think in terms of the immediate. We're always influenced by what's going on right now.

I'm writing, back in 2003, we had one party rule for a time in New Brunswick, no opposition members. We had provinces that hadn't changed party stripe in decades. We had the strong regional protest parties and not viable alternatives to two or three main parties. A lot of those dysfunctions seem to be less common now. Is that good luck or has something happened?

My guess, my inference so far, is something happened, that in a way the parties and Canadians looked at some of the dysfunction and to some extent fixed it themselves.

In Saskatchewan you had a uniting of the right-of-centre party. It was the same at the federal level in Canada, so there was a viable opposition to the Liberal Party of Canada. To some extent, working within the system, we've managed to mitigate some of the worst features of first past the post. It has many positive features and some undoubtedly negative features, but to some extent, we mitigated them.

Also, there's a lot of open government initiatives that are happening. By the way, I'm a fan of the open government partnership. I'm a fan of a lot of the open government initiatives of the current government, and some of those mitigate some of the potentially worse effects of first past the post. I think we can't be stuck in a time warp of 2003-04. There were all these studies, all this movement. We have to think about why it didn't happen. Maybe that's significant and maybe there's a reason for it. Maybe there was a good reason for it, and I'm thinking that there were, in retrospect, some good reasons why it didn't happen.

● (1525)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Reid now.

Mr. Scott Reid: Professor Schwartz, I'll start with you. Given the short time we have, it may be that I'll only be able to interact with you as opposed to the other witnesses, for which I apologize. It's just the time issue that drives this.

You made a comment that has not been said very widely in our hearings. I have a suspicion if we'd been doing this at the time of Confederation it would have been heard much more: the "alternation is important" idea. Back in those days, when parties were, to a large degree, non-ideological, and particularly before the rise of the various labour parties and socialism that really transformed the party system both here and in Britain, Australia, and so on, I think there was an expectation that you ought—it was your responsibility—to join either party A or party B, party red or party blue, and that they ought to form a majority. The expectation was, for every government there was a mirror or shadow government; they're loyal to the Queen and the Constitution which will replace it.

I think what's really happened here is that over time we have had to revise our views simply because the multi-party system is clearly a stable feature of our system. The actual parties may alternate or change, but the multi-party system.... Due to the fact that we now have a multi-party system as opposed to a political culture that says you ought to be in party A or party B, it's your job to be capable of forming a majority, do you feel the "alternation is important" idea applies to the multi-party reality that we have today?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: The mistake that people make is they say, "Well, Italy was really bad because they changed prime ministers every two weeks." But do you know what? It was too stable. It was always the same coalition that it was picking a prime minister from, so they didn't have a genuine alternation of fresh ideas and fresh people and fresh voices. Any time you have more than two choices, you have inevitable, mathematically provable problems with choosing which one is the majority preference. Of course, fresh thinking is needed when we move into a standard multi-party system in Canada. I don't think it was working very well for a long time, in the period in which I originally wrote this book. It seems to be working better now for some of the reasons I mentioned. It's actually not just good luck. I think there have been some significant adaptations.

Mr. Scott Reid: This is in Italy, right?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: Yes, exactly. In Italy there's been more change among ideologically different parties. But let me just say something about the comparative method generally, which is the same thing that's said about cybersecurity: be very careful, if I could respectfully say so. It's so easy to say, "They did this in New Zealand", and so on. Well, that's not a federal state. Or they say, "They did this in England". It has a curious kind of federalism with the European Union and Scotland and so on.

I'm a great believer in not overestimating the power of abstract reason to predict what's actually going to happen, and learning from experience. The way I thought it would roll out when I wrote this book was some province would try something, and at the federal level we could learn from that provincial experiment, but it did not happen. Studying other things is what I've been doing a lot of for the past 30 years, but it's also just reinforced my assertion of being very cautious. Is the federal level in Canada the right place to experiment with a fundamentally different system? Other things being equal, I

would rather it was tried out at some provincial level. Let's see how it actually works in a Canadian context, rather than being too quick to say it worked in Italy or New Zealand, or whatever.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right. It's the notion of the provinces as the laboratories of democracy.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: Absolutely.

Mr. Scott Reid: However, that's not one of the options we can engineer on this committee.

You mentioned you thought that a plebiscite was necessary. Your use of that word makes me think of the Prince Edward Island plebiscite that's under way right now. They use the term "plebiscite" as opposed to "referendum" in P.E.I. to this day.

Mr. Scott Reid: They're attempting to engage in a preferential ballot rather than choosing one option versus the status quo. Do you have any thoughts as to the merits of what they're doing there, the model they're using—P.E.I. is not the only place that has tried this—or one of the other preferential referenda that have existed?

● (1530)

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: I won't comment specifically on P.E.I., because I'd have to study it soberly before I would form an opinion.

There are many different forms of multiple preference ballots. There are forms in which you can do that with proportional representation, PR light or the full PR, or a single transferable ballot. Many people have talked about AV, because it's simple; it's the minimal adaptation to our existing system.

At page 56, or page *61 en français*, there's a quote from Winston Churchill about that, which I have to admit I'm rather attracted to, which is—let me put it gently—not a great idea. The problem with AV, as Churchill says, is that it puts the most weight on the most worthless ballots of the least popular parties.

Why does the second choice of a small party count more than everybody else's second choice? It doesn't actually keep proportionality, and it has a lot of other problems, but I can't get past that problem.

In terms of the language of "plebiscite" versus "referendum", I think technically one is binding and one is not, but to me it's not a legal question anyway. Legally you can do a lot of stuff without putting it to a popular vote. I see, since the Charlottetown Accord round, that there is now a morality of consent in Canada such that, if you're going to make big changes, the question should be put directly to the people in a vote.

May I say one other thing, quickly?

The Chair: You may, yes, very quickly, please. What you're saying is very interesting .

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: If all the parties agreed, we could say okay, everybody agrees; it's good. My answer is no, because the political class as a whole may have interests that are different from those of the people of Canada as a whole. If everybody votes to keep expanding Parliament and so on and so forth, it may be good for the political class. The first law of democratic reform is that it tends to favour incumbents of all stripes, so I think there would still be a need to have it vetted through a referendum.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: This is very interesting. One thing about the notion of switching every once in a while being healthy....

I'm putting this to you, Mr. Schwartz. You talked about switching political parties, but then, when you referenced the European context, you talked about switching some of the ideas and ideologies that come into government as being more important than whether you switched political parties.

Canadians went to the polls last year and changed the political parties in power, yet we're left with the same climate targets, apparently. The idea didn't necessarily change on a fundamental question.

More to that point, if I'm a voter in regions of the country in which under first past the post I see no representation—I'm in downtown Toronto and I'm a Conservative—why am I meant to be satisfied simply because the country switched? How am I any happier, if I still don't have representation for my values and my voice?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: First past the post's single biggest weakness is that most votes are wasted. That's a pretty big negative —

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right; that's a pretty big negative.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: —but there are a great many positives, and you have to keep comparing with the alternative.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: If I think this is a system in which I lost this time, but my guy's getting in next time—and I mean "guy" in a gender-inclusive form—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's part of the problem.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: —well, then I have hope: okay, we didn't win this time, but we went from 25% to 35% and maybe we'll get in next time. One of the weaknesses of first past the post is potentially mitigated if people believe, "Yes, I didn't win this time, but my voice.... Next time, my team wins."

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I know it was just a small slip, yet an important one. If we want to take it through another value lens, "my guy didn't win this time, but my guy might win next time", Canada's ranking 64th in the world in terms of women represented in our Parliament.

I'm going to extend this over to what Mr. Gibson and Ms. Smoke talked about in terms of fairness. The committee is going to get sick of my referring to it, but I think it's rather insightful that Elections Manitoba just did a study on what happened in the last provincial

election. Why people didn't vote is a question we're all engaged with here. Why didn't they vote? Why did 40-plus per cent not vote?

What they found in their bit of research, released today, was that people didn't think their votes could count, or thought that they wouldn't count. They felt, "I vote a certain way in this riding" or "I vote for a certain kind of person that my community doesn't want to vote for, so I'm not going to go out to the polls".

Ms. Smoke, you talked about coming from a very unique perspective, a first nations perspective. Your mom instructed you as my mom instructed me to be involved, yet many first nations people, many people not seeing themselves reflected—women, first nations, young people, poor people—don't bother voting.

Can we do better? How can we do better?

● (1535)

Ms. Gina Smoke: Knowing that a vote will count.... Even now, I live in a community where I am probably a minority. I live in Charleswood. I vote NDP, although if I put up a sign on my lawn, I am swamped by all the Conservative signs. I know that when I vote, my vote is not going to count in my own area.

Living on the reserve is pretty much the same thing. In these communities, for years we have felt like we didn't matter. It wasn't until 1960 that aboriginal women were finally able to vote. I was stunned by that. I guess that is why my mother's perspective was that it was important; they were always on us about how important it was to vote. I talk to my kids about it all the time, and they said the same thing to me this time around: "Why should we vote when we know it is not going to make a difference?"

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, it is hard; we face this. We all stand on doorsteps, and people say it is not going to count. It is hard to argue with the math, and Mr. Schwartz can complement this. If I am in a riding where all the evidence shows me that my vote actually will not count, that there is virtually no chance, it is a totally irrational action at that point.

I don't know if Mr. Gibson wants to comment.

Mr. Darren Gibson: That is where we get into the problem of the strategic vote. Nobody likes to talk about strategic voting, but when you are in a riding where your vote simply doesn't count but you want it to go to the next candidate or party that shares most closely your values, that is the trouble you are in. That is what I hear a lot at the door. I don't think we are talking provincial here, but I worked on provincial and federal, and it is the same response no matter which election it is: "I wish I could vote for this party, but I know they don't have a chance of winning, so I guess I'll try for my second choice, or not go out at all."

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Good afternoon, madam. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

If I have enough time I will ask each speaker a question, starting with Ms. Smoke.

In the north of my constituency of Joliette lies the Atikamekw community of Manawan, the Atikamekw First Nation. I am particularly concerned with First Nation issues.

In your comments, you mentioned obstacles to voting in Aboriginal communities: language, travel, identification. Then, in your discussion with Mr. Cullen, you said that the vote doesn't count anyway.

How would you suggest we fix that? Is it about language services, the ability of First Nations people to get to the polling stations, or relaxing the criteria for identification? Then, if there were a proportional voting system, could one or more seats per province be set aside for Aboriginal communities?

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: When it was made more complicated in this last round of elections, with the different identification you had to have to prove who you were, it kind of fed into that not caring about our vote. How do you make it better? I guess setting up systems with better places where they can go to vote and having somebody who is able to interpret for some of the people. How many politicians go up to these areas and talk to the communities? They will go to the ones that are more convenient.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: On that subject, in a proportional system, is there a need to reserve seats in each province for First Nations, so that they are well represented?

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: I do think it is a good idea, but you also have to keep in mind that it gets complicated again because of our different nationalities. I am Dakota. There are Cree, Ojibwa, and so on. Then you have to figure out how to make that work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: So, in a province, First Nations in the broad sense do not share enough values to be represented by one elected member. Is that what you are saying?

● (1540)

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: I think that's a good start. I really do. I think that would show that their voices do matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

I see that time is flying and I want to talk to the other two witnesses.

My next question goes to you, Mr. Gibson.

You said that for Unifor, your union, reforming the voting system by moving to proportional voting is important. This committee is all about reforming the voting system. Its time has come. At the same time, you said that you do not have a concrete model to propose to us. You pointed out that the government, the prime minister, announced that it was the last time that Canadians would be voting under the current system.

Time is an issue, if we want to change the voting system. The Chief Electoral Officer has said that everything has to be voted on and passed by next spring, by May or June 2017, if he is to be able to put the new system in place for the next election.

In your opinion, are those time lines realistic?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: My opinion is, no, that's not a realistic deadline. June of next year is not realistic. It could be realistic for the community to come up with a proposed model, but I don't think that in two years it's realistic to implement it. I hope that it is, because it's a long time coming, but I don't think that it is implementable.

The biggest problem is going to be educating not only our members, but our community and electorate as a whole. To come up with a model, to be able to explain it, and then try it out to make sure it's going to work in a two-year period is going to be quite a task. I'm confident this committee has that capability. It's hard to say. We'll see.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you for your confidence. We will see whether we are able to live up to it.

To wrap up, I have a question for Mr. Schwartz.

The Chair: Please be brief, Mr. Ste-Marie.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you very much for your presentation.

If I understand correctly, you are proposing the status quo. In your presentation, you say that electronic voting would be too dangerous. Basically, your preference is that we keep the status quo, the current system.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very briefly, unfortunately.

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: In *Still Thinking* I argued for PR light. My current position is not definitively settled until I see the different arguments and see what's happening at the provincial level.

With electronic voting, I'm not against it; it's just that I meant literally what I said. I think initially we underestimated the risk to democracy of tampering and so on and so forth. It's very serious and it has to be dealt with very carefully.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. May, please.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I'll start with you, Professor Schwartz. I read your paper before you reconsidered, but I'm still looking forward to hearing you.

No offence, but we sometimes get this from academics that somehow everything is okay because the system somehow adapted to it, that political parties figured it out and they're all fine now. If we're looking at the current situation in Canada, and this is one of the things that comes through from many academics, it depends on what you value; if you value how the parties are doing, then you're more sanguine than if you're concerned with how the voters are feeling. This question of parties have adapted to policy lurches and false majorities, but have the voters adapted? Isn't the case you made when you wrote—for which I can't find the date—on proportional representation for Canada or some of the work you did with the Law Commission—isn't the case the same for voters even if parties have figured it out?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] adapt, voters have adapted as well as parties. Parties are responding to the way people vote. When right of centre parties got together to form the Saskatchewan Party, eventually they won. The voters of Canada decided it was a good idea for the right of centre parties at the federal level to unite, and they elected a Conservative government. There's no sharp separation in adaptation between what the parties do and what the voters do. The parties are worried about getting elected and the voters are deciding who to vote for, so I think both have adapted.

We've had plebiscites in Canada on voting system reform. It lost with a high rule in B.C. It didn't quite get the 60%, but it did not succeed in Ontario. I would think the problem is the opposite. Academics are full of really good theories and insufficiently sceptical of reality testing them and asking what people actually think. I think the academic tendency is toward too much emphasis on abstract thinking and "I came up with a new plan", rather than seeing what's field tested, what works, what Canadians think, and how they conduct themselves.

● (1545)

Ms. Elizabeth May: With the time I have, I want to turn to our Unifor witnesses.

In terms of my sense of how people feel about voting—and this is not to leave you out of this, Professor Schwartz, since you just made the comment—Conservative voters may have been pleased that Reform became Alliance and cannibalized the Progressive Conservative Party, but it still only commanded 39% of the vote which led to a majority government that did some rather radical things that were never in the Conservative Party platform.

I'll take it to an academic level again in terms of the case for PR as a way of looking for political consensus and trying to find ways so that when one prime minister and his or her cabinet leave office, their successors don't take the whole ship of state and turn it 180°; they are more or less on the same course because all of the policies came from a place of greater political consensus as a result of our voting system. That's certainly what I've heard from a lot of our witnesses.

I'll turn to Mr. Gibson and Ms. Smoke, and then if we can fit in your comment as well, Mr. Schwartz, I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Darren Gibson: When I was looking at the numbers there, like the 39% of the vote, where's the other 61%? That's 61% of the electorate that has no representative. That's a clear majority. Where

do their interests lie? Where are their interests being held? What minority group are they from? My biggest concern is that large percentage that is not being represented. Where are they, who are they, and what are their concerns?

Ms. Gina Smoke: The communities I worked in for the first time lived in poverty, for whatever reason. I knocked on so many doors. They said to me, "Why should I vote? What can they do for me? Everybody is the same." It's really hard to try to convince people why they should vote. There were sometimes days when I felt like I didn't even know what to say to them anymore.

You're trying to tell them that everybody will make a difference. I didn't tell people how to vote. I'd just say to look at everybody and look at what they stand for. If it's people who have been in office for a long time and they haven't made a difference for them, then maybe try another one, because the only way they can make a change is to change it, and they can't change it if they don't get out and vote.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'd like to thank the three of you for being here with us today.

I say this often, so my colleagues may also get tired of hearing it. We've heard that there is no electoral system that will treat all that ails us. For instance, increasing voter participation can be addressed by mandatory voting. Removing some of those barriers for our first nations communities, you brought up—and my colleague Gabriel brought it up as well, and I'm glad you did—the identification, the language issues, and the remoteness of the community.

Are there other currently existing barriers we could address which may not necessarily get addressed by a change in the voting system? I'm not at all against PR. Right now I'm not for or against anything. I'm just trying to poke holes to see where everything lands. Are there other barriers to voting for our first nations? What are they, and what would you recommend for us to address those barriers?

Ms. Gina Smoke: I think everybody should know why it's important to vote. I don't know why we don't have it in our school systems, because it's something that we all have to do when we become old enough to vote. On the reserves we don't talk about it. Why would we talk about it, because our vote doesn't count. It's just been ingrained in people for years.

I do think it's slowly changing, the more that we do PR. I think it's important to get out there and explain to them. My mother was able to speak three different languages, so she was able to talk to the elders in the community about voting.

There are still a lot of issues around the residential schools that make it somewhat difficult to know why being involved in politics is important.

But my mother never backed down on that, and never taught us to be judgmental or to hate anybody. It was just about trying to make a change, and it's all based on education.

● (1550)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay, thank you. That's a good point.

I didn't know that it's not talked about. It's important that we know that. As you said, maybe candidates should go to the communities and speak to the elders, and not just at election time.

Ms. Gina Smoke: Exactly.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Gibson, you look like you want to add to that.

Mr. Darren Gibson: I lost my thought on that one, sorry.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Professor Schwartz, do you have anything you'd like to add?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: It's not a good idea to try to think of voting systems in terms of resolving politics as though we won't have ongoing disagreements, which is not a good thing. You can address a lot of problems within the system through the open government initiative. If there's an issue with, for example, demographic representation, there are a lot of ways to deal with that, within the parties and at other levels, without changing the voting system.

If you want to change the voting system, let's think first and foremost of its inherent issues in terms of the framework, but not as a substitute for politics. We should not dictate, "Okay, I'm on the left or the right, so I want to somehow get a system where I would win."

I keep coming back to alternation. I've heard nothing ever changes in Manitoba, where people lost safe seats, where cabinet ministers in seats that would never change, changed at the last election. Every election is a signal to the current government, which is potentially affecting the next election.

Did I waste my vote because sometimes I vote for the guys who didn't win? No. Maybe it's sending a message, and maybe my team will win the next time. People say, "Oh, my view didn't prevail," but I am in favour of parties and ideologies having office when I don't agree with them.

I'm in favour of alternation. I like the idea of different people, different voices having a turn. I like the idea of policies being evaluated and given a fresh thinking. I like the idea that one team of patronage seekers doesn't always win.

I like the idea that people who disagree get a turn in office, and they can live with the problem. If you think national security is easy because it's all about privacy, well, you try being in office and actually having to sign papers in which you're dealing with a terrorist threat, or you try being in office as the "we're all security" party and think of the consequences on personal privacy.

I like politics. I like alternation. I like disagreement. I like vitality. Anything that says we're just going to put in place the same bland majority coalition indefinitely or that doesn't allow that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, that you might change your mind, that you're not always right, and that other people should get a turn, I don't agree with. I like the vitality of legit politics.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

I think Mr. Gibson just remembered what he wanted to say.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Darren Gibson: On the education component, I'm [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] familiar with the Fair Elections Act, but it was amended so that we could not talk about education and we could not promote elections. I'm not sure if it's in this committee's mandate to make a change to that, so that we can talk about elections, and educate and promote.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Okay, Monsieur Rayes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the three witnesses, and to the people in the room, for joining us.

My question goes to Mr. Gibson and Ms. Smoke. It's a very simple question to start with.

After the committee has tabled a report, would you agree that its recommendation should be put to the people in a referendum, so that everyone can express their opinion one way or the other?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: I don't think a referendum is necessary for a number of reasons. First of all, as I said in my brief, Mr. Trudeau has already said that that will be the last election under our current system. A lot of MPs have agreed with that. Also, I've submitted in my brief an article from the *Ottawa Citizen* dated September 18, 2016, where there's no overwhelming desire to have a referendum. I think right now Canadians are just looking for a system that they can use.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the right of women to vote. I would imagine that in the 1920s, if we had held a referendum on that, most men would have voted against it, and maybe women still wouldn't have the right to vote today.

I do not think that it is time for a referendum. I think it's time for change.

Maybe I could propose a question. How much would a referendum actually cost, and what would be the time frame on that referendum?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Ms. Smoke, do you agree with Mr. Gibson's position?

● (1555)

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: I don't have enough information to say yes or no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: According to the comments you made earlier with a lot of intensity, you in your organization have learned over time that each service counts, that everyone must make themselves heard. I think that your words were the same as those you used a few minutes previously. You even finished by saying that it seemed obvious to you.

Since we know that political parties are organizations with their own interests, is it really up to them to make the final decision on such an important issue? You work for a union. When the time comes to vote for a strike or for better working conditions, for example, do you really consult all your members to ask for their opinion? When all is said and done, wouldn't you be in favour of citizens being able to express themselves?

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: So they should be able to express their opinions?

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Smoke: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Schwartz, I would like to go into that matter more deeply. I am not really convinced that politicians of all stripes will be able to reach consensus on this. I often hear people say that it is part of Justin Trudeau's election platform. However, all the polls show that only 3% of the people are interested in it.

Over the summer, I asked an intern to go through all the national debates held during the election campaign, which lasted 78 days and which we all considered to be very long. There was no significant debate between party leaders on electoral reform. It may have been mentioned; it may have slipped into a conversation.

At present, it seems that, because it is one of a list of a hundred or so proposals, it would be legitimate for a prime minister elected by a voting system that he wants to change, that he considers illegitimate, to basically decide to make the change in Parliament.

I would like to hear your comments about that.

[*English*]

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: First, I find it ironic that anyone would say that they don't like the first-past-the-post system. It produces an artificial majority, and the Liberal government won under the first-past-the-post system, and therefore it's legitimate without a national consensus to change the voting system. I see a logical contradiction there and I have a lot of problems with it.

Second, what is this? People who have not focused their minds on it, who have not seen the concrete proposals will have an amorphous opinion. People change their minds if and when a specific proposal

comes forward, and they deserve to have that. You have to have the proposal and the debate. It's in the book. The Lortie commission found, depending on how you ask the question, that people either like first past the post or they don't. There's no such thing as Canadian public opinion that's settled and crystalized on this until there's a specific proposal and until there's a referendum.

Again, take a look at what happened in the Quebec round, at what happened in the United Kingdom with constitutional change. I think the modern morality of consent is whether there are large "C" constitutional changes to the formal text of the Constitution, or whether they are effectively constitutional changes changing the voting system we've used for a century or more. Then, the morality of consent, the expectation, I think, of democratically minded Canadians is that Canadians will get a voice, and Canadians will get not just a public opinion poll voice, but they will actually get a vote that counts.

People want to make a vote that counts; that's the whole theme of this. Well, then, people should have a vote that counts on whether you change the system.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. DeCourcey.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Thank you to all three presenters.

Mr. Gibson, just to clarify your position on the referendum, is that a personal position or is that a stated policy position with Unifor?

Mr. Darren Gibson: The policy within Unifor is that we're not interested in a referendum, and it's my personal preference as well. It's not time for a referendum. We can start a model. We can pick a model from the committee's recommendation and we can try it out, and then we can go from there.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Okay, thank you.

I just wanted to clarify that. I asked the CLC representative the same question last night and they were less committal about a position on that.

I want to clarify, as well.... Professor Schwartz, I noted your comment that it is not a good idea—this might not be verbatim—to explain electoral reform as a way of doing away with disagreement in our political system. I'm reminded of testimony levelled towards us earlier on that essentially reminded us that different systems place the conflict and the tension at different places along the political spectrum, along the line of functioning of the government.

Can you talk about how you see potentially different systems still allowing for vigorous disagreement and conflict and why that could be important within our political culture?

● (1600)

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: Yes. Of course, there's a continuum: how much is consensus; how much is the ability of a government to take strong and decisive steps and pursue a program over the course of four years? Everybody, whether it's a question of how you elect them or how they behave once they're there, is at some point on the continuum, and none of this stuff is either/or.

First past the post was producing problems in terms of a permanent artificial majority in places. That really bothered me. There was not sufficient room for disagreement, because one 40% faction of society, whether Conservatives in Alberta or Liberals across Canada, was permanently in office. I thought that was discouraging people from getting involved, discouraging them from thinking they could make any difference, and so on.

First past the post has done a lot better in the last 15 years or so. Is that a coincidence, or is it because of these adaptations? I'm inclined right now, without a definitive opinion, to think that it's because of adaptations.

You want to be very careful about pursuing an alternative voting system that installs a permanent coalition of either the right of centre or left of centre. I think that's very unhealthy.

With respect to that, don't just think of parties, but think in terms of ideologies and teams as well as parties. If it's liberal, liberal-ish, and liberal-plus, or conservative, conservative-ish, and conservative-plus, the same team is constantly getting elected: the same people, the same approximate ideology. I think that's unhealthy.

I think dialectic is good. People should be able to debate. Open-minded people sometimes change their minds. People should be able to test out different ideas and live with the consequences and give somebody else a turn.

That's a value judgment. Some people might say it's more important to have stability, more important to have certainty, more important to have consistency. Personally, it's a political judgment of mine, I think that politics always benefits from foment, benefits from the dialectic, benefits from different people having a turn and taking responsibility for it.

Within that context, one book I wrote was *Revitalizing Manitoba*. If anybody thinks I'm a fan of the status quo, I've written 12 books to the contrary, including *Revitalizing Manitoba*, which is a fundamental critique of how our society operates. Pluralism is one of my most.... I put a very high value on it. Many ideas have some validity; almost none of them are completely right.

I enjoy a good argument. I think society benefits from a good argument and a sense that not only can you argue, but that once in a while you get your turn, you implement your program and see how that works, and we're the better for it, even if I don't agree with it.

I've seen some governments that did some things I very fundamentally agreed with. I think, for example, of Bob Rae's government in Ontario, which got in on the first-past-the-post system. You know what? In the long run, it was healthy that this particular ideology had a turn, that they got to test it out. Somebody who wasn't convinced it worked was Bob Rae, but unless the NDP had a turn in government, people like Bob Rae wouldn't have found

that out. I think the NDP folks in Ontario deserved a chance to have their stripe have a turn and see how it worked out, as does everybody.

People who think in terms of change and forming a consensus also think in terms of whether you want to install some permanent coalition rather than some permanent party, which I think is a very bad idea. Instead of thinking that consensus is good, think: well, groupthink isn't good; smugness isn't good; constantly preserving the status quo isn't good; not being challenged in your ideas isn't good. There is room and there should be lots of room in our political system for change.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Madam Sansoucy.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the three witnesses.

My question goes to Mr. Gibson. You said at the start that we have the opportunity to change our voting system and the opportunity will not come around again for a number of years. In my opinion, how the opportunity started and what brought it about matters little, what is important is that we have it now and we must seize it. You also said that your organization has taken a position in favour of proportional representation.

I would like to hear what led to your taking that position and the various arguments that your members put forward.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: Most of our conversations revolve around inequality in the vote. They revolve around 39% of the population forming a majority government over and over again. Proportional representation makes sense. If you're going to get 35% of a vote, then you should have 35% of those seats. I hate to say that it's as simple as that, but that's basically what our conversations always revolve around.

Gina, chime in if you'd like.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: I am not sufficiently familiar with your organization to know what led you to take such a position. How do you consult your members and how did you arrive at that position?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: As I said in my report, we had our national convention in August of this past year where we unanimously adopted a proportional representation model to go forward with. We have various political action papers as well where we talk about proportional representation and the need to change the current electoral system.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: We hear that it is a subject that does not get a lot of people excited. However, when I raised the matter in my constituency, right in the middle of the summer, I was pleasantly surprised to see the interest it raised and the desire people had to express their opinions. Since you took your position, has a renewed interest been reflected by members of other organizations in your community?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: Absolutely, yes. The level of engagement has increased significantly, yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: So what does it all mean? I feel that, after changing the voting system, our challenge will be to educate. We will have to come up with different ways to make people aware of the change. In your experience, what would be some of the ways to educate people?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Gibson: Keep it as simple as possible to understand. From my understanding, and there are three different models, there are variations of each model that each country has adopted as its own. Keep it simple. For the presenter this morning, I think his model was fantastic. It's the first I've ever heard of it. For the most part he had me, but when he got into the whole mathematics, then I was gone—

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You're not comfortable with math, okay.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Darren Gibson: He clearly put a lot of work into something that...and the key is just to keep it simple. We're looking for something that we can take back, and not only to our members, because we care just as much about the community as we do about our members. We want to be able to take something back and have simple conversations: this is what a proposed model is; this is how it's going to work, and these are the pros and maybe some cons of this model. At least we'd be able to have a simple, easy conversation.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We are a little tight for time.

[*English*]

Mr. Maguire, please.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I wanted to touch on a concern of mine, and I want to raise this with you, Mr. Schwartz.

It's been suggested by many that Canada is a leader in the world with regard to democracy and our economy. One suggestion was that we should implement a PR system, run it for a couple of elections, and then have a referendum to see what people think of it.

● (1610)

Do you think that in a solid democracy or a solid country like Canada we should be doing something like that? To me it seems like a great big experiment with our national system and our national way.

I certainly agree with your premise that alternation is a good thing. Coming from a politician, that might be a bit of a surprise, but I think that it has worked, and it does work in a democratic system.

Could you elaborate on whether you think that's dangerous or not?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: Yes, I certainly agree with the idea that simplicity and understandability are important criteria. Voters have to understand how the system works, and they shouldn't have to wait until the computer is finished two days later to find out who won.

In terms of experimentation, I'm generally pro experimentation, but you also have to be careful about the irreversible experiment, right?

An incumbent party could put in place a system which keeps them or their coalition in office forever. They could say, "Well, vote us out." No, you can't, because the system is rigged so they cannot be voted out.

I believe New Zealand had a referendum going into it, and then they had a referendum on whether or not to keep it.

For whatever it's worth, whether I agree with the system or disagree with the system, whatever the question, whatever people come up with, I don't believe in the elitist democracy view, and I've been consistent with this for over 35 years. I believe that you have to have a popular buy-in on changes that are of a fundamental nature.

Whether I disagreed with the proposal or agreed with it, I would be committed, then, now, and in the future. One thing I don't think I'm going to change my mind on is that the incumbent class doesn't get to permanently rig the system. You have to have the morality of consent, which nowadays in the world is a referendum or a plebiscite.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Maguire.

Our final questioner is Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Well, I'm very intrigued by your position, Dr. Schwartz, because it's the kind of conundrum we're in as well in this committee. You get so deep into studying different systems, thinking about all these complex issues, and getting various opinions, conflicting opinions at most times. We know we have to do something but our minds are kind of overwhelmed with all the different options and where we're going to land.

I would like to hear more about your PR light option, which you're not so sure about today. It is something that you put forth to the Law Commission. Could you explain that system a little bit more to me?

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: I wrote an article in the *Manitoba Law Journal*, which did a run of what would have happened in Manitoba if we'd had PR light all along. There were some majority governments and some minority governments, so I thought it actually worked pretty well.

PR light means you keep the current system, but add a small number of seats to compensate for the disproportionality of the first-past-the-post system.

The way you allocate seats in the PR light model, the proportional part, is not that if the Liberals get 40%, they get 40% of the PR seats; you find out who's most under-represented. Let's say the Green Party had 5% of the vote, but got less than 1% of the seats. You would say, "Who is the biggest victim of first past the post?" They would get the first PR seat. Then you would say, "Okay, who's most under-represented? You get the next PR seat." It's compensatory. It tries to counterbalance some of the dysfunctions of first past the post.

The idea of "light" is that we would predominantly keep the benefits of the existing system and we would try to mitigate it by having a limited number of PR seats. By "light" I mean we could still get a fair number of majority governments. So it would be "light" enough that if a plurality of people, a strong plurality, want a majority government, we could still get it, and it would be the most reversible one, because you wouldn't have a whole lot of people who owe their jobs to proportional seats voting against going back because their jobs depend on it.

PR light seems to me now, seemed to me then.... In the book the argument was that the best two system candidates from the criteria were first past the post and PR light. That continues to be my view. It's just a question of where the balance of wisdom lies, in light of what's happened since then.

In terms of the idea that we have to do something, the Liberal Party platform had a lot of really good stuff about open government. It also said, on Senate reform, "We don't want to spend a lot of the people's time on constitutional negotiations. We want to get on with the priorities of the country."

Even though this is one of the many things I spend a lot of time on, I'm not sure the biggest priority of Canadians right now is redoing the election system at a fundamental level. There are a lot of open government reforms we can do within the system. You can read the Liberal Party platform; there are about 30 proposals, and I think about 29 I agree with. There are a lot of reforms you can do without doing a fundamental reform of the system, and we would be the better for it, having a more democratic, pluralistic Parliament regardless of who wins. All you need is a good initiative.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: What suggestions do you have for top priority reforms?

● (1615)

Prof. Bryan Schwartz: More free votes and performance-based government: you actually measure outcomes. Rather than just guessing, ideologically, "I think this is good", well, count: "This is actually reducing crime" or "This is actually increasing crime."

I always give the example of the Republican right in the United States, which has become soft on crime again. It wasn't because they changed ideologically; they figured out that if you put people in jail for 10 years rather than giving them a chance to rehabilitate, you have destroyed them as potential contributors to the economy, you have made a mess of their family, and this is hurting everybody. It wasn't because people woke up and had an ideological epiphany.

On a great many issues, I think there is a lot more room for consensus than we have. If we would actually be willing to reason together and look at statistics, facts, and the lessons of experience, we could achieve a lot more consensus, but you have to be prepared

to measure stuff and measure it dispassionately: independent budget office at Parliament and credible independent metrics, metrics that don't change.

One of the books I am working on right now is studying the international experience with happiness metrics. The United Kingdom is innovative in terms of measuring well-being.

I have about 30, but if you ask me to list the top two, I would say more metrics and more free votes in Parliament. The one that is less talked about is the metrics stuff: actually measuring outcomes rather than thinking that because we have an ideology, it corresponds to reality. To get to a more consensus-based, more pluralism-based, and better government, being more open to empirical evidence and letting reality tell us what's happening rather than ideologically dictating reality, I think that would be a reform that all governments would benefit from.

The Chair: Thank you. We are a little tight for time.

I would like to ask the mayor to come up and say a couple of words of welcome. Say what you wish, but I would like to give you the opportunity to address the room.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mona Fallis (Mayor, Village of St-Pierre-Jolys, As an Individual) I welcome you all to St-Pierre-Jolys.

My name is Mona Fallis. I am the mayor of the village of St-Pierre-Jolys. You have heard a lot of good discussion today and you are going to hear even more as you go across the country. I encourage you to listen to all the comments, so that you can prepare a plan that represents everyone in the country.

In our little Franco-Manitoban village, we face challenges because we are surrounded by anglophones and those of other cultures. We have to work to find ways to make our voice heard.

I wish you all the best with your efforts.

[*English*]

Thank you for coming to St-Pierre-Jolys. I hope that your voyage through the country and listening to all the voices of citizens will help you formulate a good plan for all citizens.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having us. Obviously, you are welcome to stay and listen if you wish, but we are not going to tie you down here.

Thank you to the witnesses.

We will go to Mr. Alexander and Ms. Storey for two minutes at the microphones, please.

Unfortunately, I am going to have to be pretty strict about the two minutes, because there are planes to catch if we want the hearing in Toronto to take place properly.

It is Mr. Alexander, isn't it?

Mr. John Alexander (As an Individual): Yes, it is.

I would ask the chair's indulgence. My speech is two minutes and 20 seconds long. I will go as fast as I can.

The Chair: Go ahead.

●(1620)

Mr. John Alexander: Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman.

My name is John Alexander. I am a Canadian citizen and 75 years old. I started to vote when I was 17 and joined the RCAF in the 1950s. At that time, if you were old enough to die for your country, you were old enough to vote. I have voted in every municipal, provincial, and federal election in which I was entitled to.

As a matter of fact, in October 1970, when "Wacky" Bennett, the premier of B.C., made his famous statement that B.C. would be the first out of Confederation, not Quebec, I made sure I was on the B.C. voters list even though I was working in Germany. The vote did not happen.

First, why don't we look at the problem we are trying to fix? What? No problem? That takes care of that. There is no fix required.

Some would say that first past the post is an old system. Admittedly, it has served us well for 149 years, although I have been told that it existed in Nova Scotia in 1757, which I cannot prove. I am holding a pencil here. The first pencil was made in 1565 in a small town in England, and I don't see anyone trying to reinvent the pencil.

Others say that first past the post does not give a 50% plus one majority to the winner. So what? Fifty per cent is just a number. It could easily be 55%, or anything else. To artificially boost the number of votes by using weird and wonderful count-back systems makes no sense. Half of today's Parliament is made up of MPs who did not get over 50% of the vote, nor did today's government, as they only achieved 39%. This means that 61% rejected today's government. As a matter of fact, our Parliament does not use a 50% threshold for any of its votes. It uses a majority win and that is that.

In conclusion, I say to you, what is the problem? Let us retain first past the post voting as our Canadian system. And have a referendum? You betcha.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Alexander.

Ms. Storey, please, and then Mr. Hayward.

Ms. Katharine Storey (As an Individual): Thank you.

My name is Kate Storey. I come from Grandview, Manitoba, which is in the northwest of Manitoba. Thank you very much for coming here this afternoon.

I'm going to tell you what the problem is. First past the post is broken, or at least, it's broken for me. I don't like divisive politics. I think parliamentarians should work together. I don't believe that any

one parliamentarian or any one party has all the answers. I believe we get good decisions when we force people to sit down and work out their differences rather than fighting over them in the media.

I say no to referenda because we know they are very easily manipulated by those who have the power to do that. They're not the voice of the people. They're a voice of power.

I don't like any system that leads to a majority government, because, as I said, I think people should sit down in a minority, work out their differences, and get better results. I would like to see a proportional representation system.

I don't know which one that should be. I don't know if you've talked about dual-member systems or not. My reasoning is that I live in one of the very large ridings. We are very split demographically, and the majority doesn't care about most of us minority voices. My MP doesn't pay us any heed.

I heard you talking about the problem with ridings that are too big. Well, we are way past that. There is no way for an MP to visit every community, and as far as I'm concerned, it wouldn't matter if the riding were twice the size. I would like to see proportional representation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Storey.

Mr. Hayward, please, followed by Mr. Mahaffy.

Mr. Terrance Hayward (As an Individual): I'd like to follow up on the welcome the mayor of St-Pierre-Jolys gave you and let you recognize that we are on Treaty No. 1 land and also the traditional homeland of the Métis Nation. I think that is an important factor here. As Ms. Storey just mentioned, she's from Grandview, which is quite a distance from this area. We have people here from Buffalo Point, close to the U.S. border. We have people here from all around rural Manitoba.

One thing that I would like this committee to also concern itself with and very much look at is education. When my son was in high school, he came home and said that his civics teacher said there was no reason to vote because it doesn't count. That's from our school system. Well, the teacher got a call from me.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Terrance Hayward: As well, some other things happened, but now that I have been a little involved in politics—as some of you may know, I ran unsuccessfully in this riding three times—I've never felt that my vote was lost. I got out there and told people what I stood for, and we went from 7% in 2011 to 35% or 37%, I think, in 2013 in the by-election, and also in the general election.

Even though people might not get the person they want in there, their vote is one to count. The important thing is to get up to 100% showing up, the way we did with our Stats Canada long-form census. We got it back in, or the government put it back in, and people got their say. They have to do this in that way.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hayward.

If Mr. Edward Alexander could go to the other mike while Mr. Mahaffy provides his comments, that would be great.

Mr. Mahaffy.

Mr. Blair D. Mahaffy (As an Individual): Hello. I'm Blair Mahaffy. I'm from Lorette, which is part of this riding as well. I'm with the Green Party in this riding, a small fraction of the voters.

I thought the political diversity of the backgrounds in this room was very interesting. It shows how people can come together at a table and work on a problem. This is why I'm a big supporter of proportional representation. I think it's really good to get lots of good ideas at a table and come up with an idea together.

I don't think that happens so much with first past the post and the big majorities that tend to drive things through.

I think the Liberal Party has been very courageous in opening up this committee to a lot of different opinions.

I want to make one quick comment on Professor Koop's observations. There were 600,000 Green voters, 800,000 Bloc voters, three-million-and-some NDP voters, many of whom do not feel they have a representative in Parliament. I'm sure Ms. May can't deal with all 600,000 Green voters.

I'd like to have more representation for my views. I'm probably very similar to many people across the country who don't feel our local representative follows our views, and we may not get a sympathetic ear.

I like the idea of having someone in a regional setting or a proportional setting that has a sympathetic ear to my views.

Thank you. Good luck.

●(1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have Mr. Edward Alexander.

Mr. Hoeppner, take microphone two, please.

Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Edward W. Alexander (As an Individual): Hi, my name is Ed Alexander and I live at Buffalo Point in Manitoba. It is a first nation reservation although I am not a first nation person. I represent only my own views here this afternoon, and perhaps those of others who are not here.

There are four points I want to make. First, the public perception of the importance of candidates and MPs has decreased. Second, political parties have become a necessary evil. Third, leadership cult has been given too much importance. Fourth, my view of the best solution to electoral reform is the alternative vote. I'll briefly touch on those.

I believe that many voters today have forgotten that they are electing a member of Parliament. They think they're voting for a party, or they think they're voting for a party leader. They are covered that way.

I think also that in some cases they feel they are voting for a person who has to go and vote the way they want, take their

particular view to the government, and enforce it on the land. I look at gun control as the type of thing that happens there.

Parties also, I think, treat their MPs poorly a lot of times, in that they treat them as puppets on a string. They vote the party line and that's it, or else.

When I vote, what I look for in my ideal candidate is integrity, intelligence, and courage; that is, he is willing to stand up against the party and against the extremists in his own constituency.

Political parties, I think, have value in bringing people together to study and establish policies and positions. Unfortunately, when it comes to implementation, these positions are often guided by what's best for the party, rather than what's best for the country. They sometimes sink to very low levels with attack ads, which does not improve our system at all. I know all the members are good, honest people. It must then be through the parties that corruption comes into our governments. That's another reason why I'm not too happy with them.

I don't think I need to say much on leadership cults. I just think we're paying way too much attention to that, rather than the consensus made by the members. I believe we will get consensus among people if we go through the AV system.

Thank you.

●(1630)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would invite Mr. Bruce McKee to take microphone one.

Go ahead, Mr. Hoeppner.

Mr. Dirk Hoeppner (As an Individual): Hi. My name is Dirk Hoeppner. Like Gina, who was speaking to you earlier, I'm from Charleswood. I, too, know what it's like to not be represented in my own riding.

You guys were talking earlier about various forms of PR, such as mixed member proportional and I believe the professor's made-in-Canada model as well. A couple of things you guys talked about were discussed in such a way that I got the idea you found them to be drawbacks to the system, whereas I see them as potentially beneficial. One of those was the issue of local representation, which you might find is a little more difficult when you have the extra seats being filled from party lists. One thing not really discussed here was the single transferable vote, which is another means of doing sort of the same thing.

With the larger ridings that you'd be having, of course managing those ridings would be a little more difficult. But if we're using multi-member ridings with regard to local representation, I would suggest that you might want to consider the fact that you get more than one MP to speak to who can represent you. Your riding might be bigger, but let's say you're a Green like me, or something like that, living in a Conservative riding...or I guess now it's Liberal federally. I don't feel as though I'm represented. If we had a larger riding, and let's say a Green got in, or perhaps in one part of the riding an NDP person got in, I could go to that MP.

For those of you who aren't being represented, or for those of us whose votes are being thrown away under first past the post, something like mixed member proportional or single transferable vote or what have you would potentially mitigate that problem by giving you more representation or more optional representation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Wyndels, would you please come up to microphone two.

Ms. Anita Wyndels (As an Individual): I'll pass.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. McKee.

Mr. Bruce R. McKee (As an Individual): Thank you.

My name is Bruce McKee. I'm from north of St. Adolphe, which is just south of Winnipeg. I'm part of the Provencher constituency, which is very large. I want to thank the chairman, the MPs, and staff for coming today to be part of Provencher and to see our beautiful countryside here. I'd like to welcome you and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

I want to encourage the committee in these meetings to maybe advertise this more broadly. I was surprised not to hear this morning on my local radio station 1250 that this meeting was taking place. I would like my fellow constituents across this riding to have the opportunity to be part of these meetings, which I think are very valuable. I just want to encourage you to make sure it's well advertised. I also want to encourage you to advertise the online questionnaire so that you get a good broad spectrum of what the people want to see in these types of talks and considerations.

I want to very much encourage you to make sure that before changing anything, you get this right. We should stick with the current system, which has served us well for over 100 years, until we're convinced that this is right and Canadians have given voice, to give you an okay for you to proceed, through a referendum. I think this is the best and most acceptable way to continue and to bring this to a point where Canadians have felt that they have had their say and have confirmed that this is the right way to proceed.

I want to thank everybody for the time you've spent away from your families and loved ones to do this across the country, and to affirm what you're doing in Ottawa. You're serving your country, your nation, and your constituents, and I just want to thank you for that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your kind words of encouragement. We appreciate them.

Finally, we have Mr. Mayer, and then Mr. Jag.

Mr. Charles J. Mayer (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to echo what the previous presenter just said. We are all in your debt, because you choose to serve our country. We all do that in our own way.

Let me make three brief comments. I heard today that the system we have is a time warp; let's come up with a model, try it out, and make sure it works, and it's simply time for change.

We will celebrate, a year from now, our 150th birthday. By any measure, this country shouldn't work. If you go from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland, it takes you almost a third of the way around the world. You get to Minsk, which is halfway between Warsaw and Moscow. We are an improbable country. We cover five geographic regions. We don't have a common language. We have several time zones, five, six, seven, depending on how you measure it. We don't have common geography. We don't go back thousands of years in history. Yet in 150 years we've become one of the most, if not the most, desirable places to live in the world.

My contention, as us old farmers say, is that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Unless you can come up with something that will show us how it will be better.... I'd very much like to hear from the committee how you think it will improve.

Also, if you take away the direct vote, my sense of it is this. I ran for office five times and was elected four times. The last time I ran third and the voters sent me home, but that's another story. If you take away our direct vote, my sense is that voter turnout will go down. I haven't heard anybody talk about voter election turnout in provincial, municipal, urban areas. They are way down. By any measure, people should be in a better position to understand those issues as opposed to federally, when we talk about fiscal and monetary policy and everything else. Voter turnout is way down in those areas.

Unless you can come up with something that improves everybody voting, I think voter turnout—

The Chair: Thank you—

Mr. Charles J. Mayer: Can I make one last point?

The Chair: Go ahead, one last line.

Mr. Charles J. Mayer: The last thing to say is that there is no perfect solution. We know that. Somebody said that the best solution is a benevolent dictator. Lord Acton, over 100 years ago, put that to rest when he said that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

There is no perfect system, but ours is as close to it, as we have it now, as we'll ever get it.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thanks for your service to Canada. We appreciate that.

Finally, Mr. Jag.

Mr. Gavin R. Jag (As an Individual): I'm Gavin Jag. I'm from Saint Boniface in Winnipeg.

I would like to see a change. For my generation—I'm 39 years old—a lot of my friends don't even go out and vote anymore, because we find our vote is not really counting. We're making a statement of who we want, but we're not seeing representation in the Canadian government. It would be nice if there were some system of proportional voting so that when I vote for the Green Party or for another little guy, we would at least have some representation, somebody who will listen to us.

For the people who say it's not broke, well, that's because the people they want are in power. No kidding it's not broke—for them. It's broke for me and it's broke for my generation. We're not even going out to vote. What's the point if I go out and vote and there's no one to hear me?

So it would be really cool, and more of the younger people would go out, if they were heard. Then they'd have someone they could talk to.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. You made the point that there is some frustration out there.

We appreciate all the views we've heard today. It's been great to be in your town again. I've been here before, and it's great to be here again. Thank you for having us. Thank you for listening to the testimony and to our questions. Have a great day.

Just as a reminder, we have a deadline of December 1 to table a report in the House. It will be available on the web.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think our analysts feel stress every time we talk about the deadline here.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: The point I'm trying to make is that you'll have some good reading material available around that time on the web.

Thank you very much.