



Consultation: Electoral Reform

Sean Fraser, MP Central Nova
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the consultations our constituency office hosted on the issue of electoral reform. Over the course of the summer of 2016, we accepted the Minister of Democratic Institutions' invitation to conduct town halls on this important issue in our riding. In order to gather feedback directly from constituents, we hosted three consultations dedicated to this issue, and an additional 14 town halls on issues of general concern, that often involved discussions pertaining to electoral reform. In addition to our face-to-face sessions, we encouraged constituents to participate in this exercise in democratic engagement by contacting our office in writing, by phone, or via social media to share their thoughts. Over the course of our consultation process, we engaged with several hundred constituents.

By way of background, Central Nova is a large geographic riding (over 10,000 sq. km), that consists primarily of small towns and rural communities. The major issues facing our communities primarily relate to the economy, though many people in Central Nova place social justice and environmental issues high on their list of political priorities as well.

After completing our consultations on the issue of electoral reform, we received significant feedback on matters relating to the different potential voting systems we could implement at the federal level, ways to increase voter turnout, the importance of public finance in elections, and proposed changes to election day itself.

Although all of the feedback we received is valuable, it is essential to note that the vast majority of our participants attended with a view to learn about the different possible formats that electoral reform could take, rather than to give input on a specific system or change they would like to see implemented (with some notable exceptions of course). The sense I have after completing this process is that electoral reform is not well understood by the public at-large, despite a very high level of sophistication and engagement amongst our community minded participants.

II. VOTING SYSTEMS

The bulk of our discussions revolved around the different kinds of systems that the federal government could implement, including maintaining our current First Past the Post (FPTP) system, implementing a proportional representation system (PR), or moving towards a ranked-ballot system. Some of the individuals who attended our sessions had their minds made up in advance as to which kind of a system they would like to see implemented (and on some occasions, the specific model that should be adopted), however that was the exception. A significant majority of people had not considered in great detail the different kinds of electoral

systems around the world. As a result, we did our best to steer the conversation towards what interests motivated people when it came to their electoral system, as opposed to which system they preferred, in hopes that their interests could be reflected in whichever system is implemented.

It is essential to note that a vast majority who attended our sessions were in favour of some kind of change to the electoral system. However, it is difficult to determine with certainty if this particularly engaged group of citizens reflects the view of the general population. For example, I could identify many attendees as members of the campaign teams for different parties during the last federal election. I have maintained a very positive personal relationship with the individuals in attendance, despite our diverging political affiliations. Outside of this relatively small group of citizens who are highly engaged in politics in my community, it is difficult to discern if there is general public interest in the issue of electoral reform, notwithstanding the heated debated in Parliament and the fact that it is a dominant topic of conversation in the Ottawa bubble.

In this context, I am happy to provide the following summary of the feedback we received during our consultation process on this issue.

a. Referendum

One of the biggest surprises of the consultation process was that of the several hundred people in attendance, only three made comments suggesting that the federal government should hold a referendum on whether to change the electoral system in Canada (and one additional person made written submissions to that effect, which are included as an appendix to this report).

By and large, the people who attended our consultations were dramatically opposed to hosting a referendum on this issue. There is no single reason why this was the case, however, it should be noted that most people in attendance were of the view that a change of some kind should take place, and a referendum poses a stumbling block of sorts for change in any circumstance.

The main reasons for opposition to a referendum were as follows:

- Referenda is a poor way to make policy and we elect politicians to make decisions that are in the best interests of those they represent;
- Referenda promote the “tyranny of the majority”;
- Referenda should be reserved for issues that constitute what Canada is as a country, not issues of policy;
- Referenda results often favour the “No” side, which doesn’t give a fair shot at making a significant and positive change;

- Depending on the question, voters may vote against a particular kind of system, when they do want some kind of change, which wouldn't accurately reflect the population's desire for a change;
- Referenda often bring out those strongly opposed to an idea, while those who tacitly think change may be positive don't care enough to vote in a non-election;
- Hosting a non-binding referendum would be an enormous expense we don't need; and
- Lower voter turnout in referenda don't often capture a cross-section of society and can lead to the ignoring of certain sectors of the population, particularly disabled persons and those living in lower socio-economic strata.

In addition to these reasons, it has become apparent to our office that the majority of attendees (who are ostensibly amongst the most politically engaged citizens in Central Nova) had very little information or experience with the issue of electoral reform, aside from a few political science professors or volunteers with organizations that actively promoted electoral reform. Without judging the appropriateness of holding a referendum, it would be essential to launch a massive public awareness and education campaign on the different possible systems if we the goal was to have an informed vote on the merits.

b. Systems

i. The Current First Past the Post System

Most Attendees Wanted a Change

Most of the attendees at our town halls disagreed with the notion that our current system is appropriate in a multi-party democracy in the 21st century. The chief complaint was that it was designed for a two-party system and that it produced "false majorities" (i.e. less than half of national voters could elect a majority government). Other criticisms included the notion that it produced combative political parties and elected officials and that many voters felt their vote did not count towards anything.

Current System Promotes Politically Moderate Viewpoints and Has Served Canada Well

Interestingly, only one person made an active defence to keep our current version of the FPTP system. His argument was well made and reflected the fact that our system has been fairly successful over the course of our nation's history. More importantly, perhaps, his argument was based on the notion that our current system encouraged parties to consider views on the extremes of the political spectrum, but promote more moderate points of view that would be acceptable to Canadians generally. This process of considering extreme viewpoints, but promoting moderate policies is something he felt served Canada well over its history.

ii. Proportional Representation

One of the major themes behind our consultation process was that a majority of attendees believed that increasing the proportionality in our system would be a good thing, though this was not a universally shared belief. At the macro-level, there was a general sense that the House of Commons should more closely reflect the national vote, or potentially the regional vote. However, proportional representation also caused some concerns for many people at the local riding level.

There were some proponents for a specific kind of proportional representation, including mixed-member proportional systems and the single transferable vote. However, most advocates for proportional representation that attended our consultations supported proportionality generally, rather than a specific system. Anecdotally, it seemed as though the most commonly supported version of proportional representation was a mixed-member system, though this may simply be a reflection of the relative complexity of other systems.

The concerns we heard about proportional representation and the interests motivating people who supported or disagreed with this kind of system generally are outlined below.

Support for Proportional Representation

All Votes Should be Reflected in the Makeup of the House of Commons

The primary reason we heard in support of proportional representation was that some people felt as though their vote did not count because they typically support a losing candidate, and the House of Commons under-represented their preferred party in terms of that party's share of the national vote. This point was made on a number of occasions, but was made by nearly every attendee who self-identified as a supporter of the NDP or Green Party.

Proportionality Would Enhance Collaboration

Some supporters of proportion representation argued that adopting a more proportional system would spur increased collaboration by elected officials and political parties. Presumably, this was a result of the assumption that there would be a reduction in the number of majority governments, and that with minority governments, there would potentially be coalitions that form to govern Canada, or that different parties could hold the balance of power, which would require collaboration with other parties to ensure the government does not fall.

Proportionality would Increase Equal Participation

Some proponents for a more proportional system suggested that proportionality would allow for greater participation by women and minorities if the system were designed to have that

effect. Some pointed to the example of New Zealand, which has increased its indigenous representation to mirror the national population through a proportional system.

Proportionality Places Focus on National Issues

Some argued that a proportional system is better because it would keep the debated in parliament focused on national, as opposed to local issues (this was the subject of serious challenge from other as outlined below). The theory presented was that a proportional system encourages people to focus their votes more on a political party than a local representative, such that the motivating factors behind a person's vote would likely mirror national priorities adopted in a campaign platform, as opposed to someone who approaches their role as MP from a local perspective with the intention of addressing local issues. Again, this point of view was harshly criticized by the majority of people who spoke to this point.

Proportionality Could Increase Voter Turnout

Finally, a handful of individuals suggested that proportional representation would potentially increase voter turnout because it would eliminate the feeling that your vote doesn't count, which could discourage supporters of small parties from going to the polls.

Proportionality Allows for Debate on Issues that are Cutting Edge

By giving a voice to those who speak for a relatively small number of voters that often find themselves on the edges of the political spectrum, we could give proper consideration to important issues that are not yet mainstream. One attendee suggested our current system promotes "vanilla" politics to argue that we shy away from issues that are progressive in nature because we too often pander to the middle.

Shortcomings of Proportional System

Complexity is a Drawback and Could Discourage Voter Turnout

Many people feared that proportional representation presented too complex a change in the system. The theory is that people like knowing they can simply show up to vote, mark an "X" beside the name of their preferred candidate and wait for the poll results to come in. They believed that implementing too complex a system could discourage people from voting if they don't understand the system. As a side note, although many of the systems presented by a political science professor at the outset of our consultation did seem complex, the most complicated aspects took place during the counting phase, rather than the voting phase, such that the importance of this factor should not be overblown from a voter turnout perspective.

The Danger of Unforeseen Consequences

We heard numerous comments to the effect that we should tread carefully when implementing a system that is too different from what we currently have because predicting the results in the long-term is nearly impossible. Implementing a proportional system would presumably assist the smaller existing parties in gaining their representative share of seats in the House of Commons in the short term, but could also lead to a proliferation of parties in the long term that completely change the political landscape in Canada (for better or worse). The possibility of significant unforeseen consequence caused some advocates for change to suggest we take baby steps, so we can tinker with the system over a few election cycles until we have something that works, rather than boldly implementing something that we could not walk away from once the change takes place.

Promotes One Issue Parties and Offensive Points of View – a High Threshold is Necessary

It was widely acknowledged that the current system presents a problem for smaller parties like the Green Party, and to a lesser extent, any party that is not in the position of Government or the Official Opposition because they typically have a smaller share of the seats in the House of Commons than is reflected in their share of the national vote.

The possibility of giving a platform to smaller parties would enable those who have only one-issue or who have very offensive points of view (i.e. promotion of racism) to gain representation in the House of Commons. This would promote parties that have no plans to govern and would give a platform to those who wish to broadcast messages that have no place in our society.

Although there were diverging points of view, it was widely agreed that a threshold would be necessary before a proportionality assessment would kick in. That is to say that a party should not be entitled to a seat in the House of Commons because they got 1% of the vote. But that perhaps parties with 5 or 10% of the national or regional vote (or more) should have the seats in the House of Commons reflect that reality. A threshold of this nature would mitigate against the risk of one-issue parties or offensive messaging gaining a foothold in federal politics.

Decrease in Stability of Government

The likely increase in minority governments would potentially decrease stability in the Government of Canada, which many attendees were concerned about. The example of Italy was used to demonstrate the fruitless exercise of having parties in constant campaign mode when they know another election is always imminent. This places parties' focus on winning elections, as opposed to governing, which does not serve the populace well.

Accountability

Accountability was a major concern raised by our participants, at both the riding level and nationally. When it came to electing local candidates, we heard nearly universal support (including from advocates for proportional representation) that any system must have MPs face the electorate. It is unacceptable to give parties a say in who represents Canadians – that is the job of the constituents’ whose representation is at stake. There were sincere fears that allowing party-appointees to sit in the House of Commons would leave those MPs accountable only to the party, as opposed to their constituents. The fear is that their voting as MPs would reflect the wishes of the party, which may not correspond with the wishes of their constituents, and that they would not have an opportunity to vote out a politician that acts against the interests of their constituents, when that politician always remains loyal to their party, thus guaranteeing their re-appointment as MP.

Constituents also feel rather strongly that they should be able to vote out a government they believe is doing a poor job when the time comes. The idea that you can’t clearly tell which party forms government in the world of coalitions gives many cause for concern because the government would be chosen in some instances through negotiation between parties, rather than voting.

Coalitions and Minority Governments are Less Efficient when Implementing a National Agenda

Most attendees that did not actively support proportional representation expressed concern that a PR system would lead to minority governments or coalitions in perpetuity. This has the potential to create ad-hoc governance that reflects a few special interests, rather than a well-thought out national agenda that could be implemented by a majority government.

Small Ridings are Better than Big Ones

We heard that people in our constituency (which is quite large and rural in nature) that having a smaller riding would be preferred since the present circumstances require a representative to act on behalf of many different communities who may not always share interests. Having a single MP with a small geographic region and a limited number of distinct communities or region would allow people to feel as though their representative is not acting against their interests when acting on behalf of other communities they represent.

Single MPs for Each Riding are Good

Although there was some division on the importance of this issue, some attendees expressed a desire to have a single MP they could go to when faced with an issue involving the federal government. The potential to get conflicting information from different MPs in a single riding was problematic in the minds of some.

One observer believed that we could potentially have MPs offices with staff that are independent from the MP since they deal with many of the day-to-day cases. This, in theory would help alleviate the conceptual problem of having multiple MPs in a single riding.

MPs are Local Representatives and Must Represent a Distinct Area

Most of our attendees believe the role of an MP, particularly in a rural area with distinct communities, is to be a strong representative and advocate for their riding and their constituents. This is an absolute deal-breaker to any form of proportional representation that could be put forward. When people vote they want to consider both their local candidate they believe will best stand up for them and the party leader who may become Prime Minister. Despite some serious constitutional quandaries, we did hear from a few people that they would even prefer to vote separately for the MP and the Prime Minister.

Creating two-tiers of MPs when some represent a distinct riding and other do not, was completely unacceptable to many attendees. Universally, people believed that if a proportional system were adopted, if a second tier of MPs were created, the additional tier of MPs (which are appointed/elected to reflect the proportion of the national or regional vote) would need to be elected to represent a distinct region.

Geography Matters

We heard loud and clear that in a primarily rural area, having a local representative is essential. Some commented that in an urban setting with many MPs in a single city, there may be more importance on regional advocacy. However, in a rural area, almost all of the “local” work of the MP involves projects or people that are located in (or live and work in) the riding the MP represents. This potentially makes proportional representation more difficult to implement successfully in rural ridings than urban areas that already have multiple MPs in a single city.

iii. Ranked Ballots

Our consultations also considered ranked ballots at length, though the range of opinions and ideas were far less varied than we heard on proportional representation.

We did not have anyone actively oppose a ranked-ballot system, however, proponents of proportional representation were quick to point out (quite accurately) that implementing ranked ballots did not cure the primary problem with our current FPTP system – that a minority of Canadians may elect a majority government. As such, in the event a proportional system is implemented, there did not seem to be any opposition to including a ranked ballot in a proportional system when it came to electing local MPs and there was considerable support for this approach (whether under a proportional system or a new version of our current system).

Under a ranked balloting system some advocates for PR criticized the possibility that, although their vote may count, their top choice may still not be factored in the final vote (if, for example, a voter had their second or third choice go towards the ultimate winner). As such, if there were a way to provide a benefit to a voter's top choice who does not win a local election, that would help make a ranked ballot more palatable for voters. One example includes the potential to revert to a publicly funded per vote subsidy (rather than a refund based on campaign spending) and to provide the subsidy to a voter's top choice, rather than to the person and party that ultimately gets credit for their vote. This would help level the playing field from a fundraising perspective over time and help eliminate the need to vote strategically as well.

Many people in attendance preferred a ranked ballot system that would ensure a local representative was at least ratified by 50% or more of the population. This would ensure that candidates who gained 40% of the vote, but deeply offended 60% would never be elected. It was noted that every major party uses a ranked ballot system to elect their leader and that for a single position contest, ranked balloting was likely the best approach.

iv. *All Decisions by Referendum*

One participant argued that the only democratic way to govern was to take all power from MPs and to require that all votes in the House of Commons take place by way of a referendum and that the local MP is required to vote in accordance with the result of referendums in their constituency. Ironically, this individual did not argue that there should be a referendum on electoral reform, but that his preferred system be implemented and that referenda be hosted on every issue thereafter.

III. INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

In addition to implementing a potentially new voting system, we discussed how to increase democratic participation through changes to the electoral process as well. Some of these discussion topics included inclusivity and simplicity, changing the voting age, online voting, and mandatory voting. Each of these topics is addressed below.

a. Inclusivity and Simplicity

Our participants believed that voting and taking part in the electoral process as a candidate should be made more inclusive. We should be gathering data to determine which sectors of our population vote less often or are elected less often than others and why. We should use this information to promote democratic participation in the process from demographics that are under-represented.

In terms of representation of different minorities and genders, we heard suggestions about reserving a particular number of seats for people from different backgrounds.

We should also ensure that all polling stations are accessible for persons living with disabilities and for anyone who may have trouble getting to polling stations as a result of their age, geographic location, or otherwise.

We heard sincere frustration about how difficult voting can become for some. In the absence of widespread voter fraud, we should ease the restrictions relating to requirements for ID at the polling station, which discriminate against students and indigenous people. We should also allow someone to vote at a polling station of their choice whenever possible so that a mix-up in the Elections Canada mail outs don't cause someone to become frustrated with the process and choose not to vote at all.

b. Engaging Young People and Lowering the Voting Age

Everyone who spoke to the issue agreed that we should do more to engage young people in the electoral process. However, there was some disagreement on the specifics.

We heard submissions suggesting the voting age should be reduced to 16. Points were made to the effect that this would rarely impact the outcome of an election since evidence from school-based mock elections demonstrated that their outcomes typically aligned with federal election results at the riding level. However, we did have a few individuals speak against lowering the voting age, though when asked why, the only arguments were made on the basis that it seemed too young, or that 16 year olds were too immature to make important decisions that impacted others, which were not compelling to the audience.

A former school principal made the point that programs designed to encourage youth to participate in government (such as Forum for Young Canadians) have become very expensive and only a few students from each school are able to enjoy experiences like this. However, those who do take part in programs of this kind tend to be more engaged. Providing support to schools that take on civic engagement exercises would be a healthy way to encourage youth participation in Canadian democracy.

c. Online Voting

Online voting was the subject of some very interesting discussion. Everyone who spoke on the issue realized there were benefits to implementing electronic voting, such as increasing voter turnout, encouraging young people to vote, making voting easier for people that are not mobile (including seniors), and that it would generally be a simpler way to cast your ballot. However, there were severe reservations about the potential for fraud if online voting were implemented. Some participants noted that even banks do not have a perfect track record when it comes to serving people online, so they feared the consequences of a federal government being elected in a system that has security risks. If online voting is implemented (as it has been in many Canadian municipalities), the attendees of our consultations would need strong assurances that it was not subject to a security breach and that it would not crash mid-election before embracing the idea.

d. Mandatory Voting

We had fairly limited conversations about mandatory voting during our conversations. The positions were conflicting, but some interesting feedback came out as a result. We heard several proponents argue in favour of mandatory voting with fines for those who did not vote. The best rationale we heard in favour of mandatory voting was that it would do more than any other system to ensure the House of Commons reflected the intentions of all Canadians, because all Canadians would have voted. Australia was cited as an example that has implemented mandatory voting with some success that could be emulated in Canada given our similar history and political institutions.

If voting is made mandatory, we heard that it should be made very easy to vote, and that non-partisan voter education would be of extraordinary importance.

Despite a healthy discussion of the issue, a majority of participants seemed uncomfortable with the idea of mandatory voting and would prefer a system that inspires people to vote for something, rather than forcing civic engagement on the population.

IV. MONEY IN ELECTIONS

We heard some criticism of the changes made to election campaign finance that rewards those who spend the most. Instead a reliable publicly funded campaign contribution would be preferred to promote the independence of politicians who need to rely less on financial contributions with people that have an interest in specific policy outcomes. Reverting to a per vote subsidy would be appropriate.

Comparisons were drawn to the United States in a post-*Citizens United* world, where private entities drive the agenda of politicians at every level, rather than letting talented individuals bring forward bright ideas of their own. We should be careful not to go down that path.

V. ELECTION DAY

We heard some interesting comments along the way about changes that could be made to Election Day itself that we wished to include in this report. We heard people speak in favour of fixed-election dates to remove the ability of a government to choose a strategically convenient time to call an election and stay in power, when other parties may not be prepared on short notice. We also heard a suggestion that Election Day be made a national holiday to ensure that no person has obligations that could prevent them from taking part in this important exercise.

VI. CONCLUSION

The exercise of seeking citizen feedback on the issue of electoral reform was important and rewarding. Over the course of 17 town hall discussions (three of which included dedicated discussions to this issue), we heard from hundreds of constituents. At times the submissions were made in larger audiences of up to 100, other times the discussion would be more intimate with only a dozen or so participants. Each event we held resulted in feedback that was worth including in this report and certain common themes emerged over the course of the summer.

The bulk of our discussion involved whether the federal government should change the electoral system we currently employ, and if so, which system should we adopt. To summarize the general outcome of this discussion (though it is certainly with some controversy), the majority of our attendees would like to increase the proportionality currently in our system by recognizing the need to add representatives to the House of Commons to ensure the body of elected representatives more closely reflects the results of the national vote. There was not a single overwhelming proportional system that the audiences preferred, though some form of mixed-member proportionality was likely the most popular. Any change in this regard cannot come at the cost of having effective local representation with an MP that is responsible for a constituency. At the riding level, people generally prefer a ranked ballot to our current system (again, with some controversy), that would ensure the elected MP has the confidence of at

least 50% of their constituency, even if they may not be the first choice of half the population they represent. There is general recognition that a ranked ballot system would not cure the issue of having a minority of Canadians elect a majority government.

It is of the utmost importance that these conclusions be considered in the context of our consultation process. The attendees of our consultations were largely in favour of a change and did not want a referendum. There is no suggestion that what we heard aligns with the will of the general population, who I would argue are less likely to come to a public consultation if they do not hold a strong position on whether and to what extent a change is needed.

I thank the Special Committee for considering the input of my constituents and would be pleased to provide any further information it may require.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Fraser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Sean Fraser

MP for Central Nova

Appendix

In this appendix, we have included correspondence that has been forwarded to our office since the announcement of electoral reform consultations.

Form Letter signees: I support proportional representation for Canada

The constituents listed after this form letter had e-signed it and it was forwarded to our office. Given your portfolio, I thought it important to include in this report.

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Monsef,

I support your government's promise to make 2015 the last first-past-the-post election. We can create a strong, fair and inclusive voting system for Canada.

I'm writing today to call on you to support proportional representation and make sure every vote counts in the next election.

Sincerely,

**Diane Smeltzer
Hugh McLean
Barb Bell
Paul Bissonnette
Dolna Garbary
Timothy Rhude
Marie-Claire Declerck
Patricia Miffen
Stacey Cornelius
Gail Allen
Judith Pink
David Pink
David Morgan
Jason Fitzpatrick
PJ MacIntyre
Janet Shively
Christine Briand
Elizabeth Wilson
Lisa Prince
Moraig Macgillivray
Gregory MacKenzie
Margaret Greene
Kathleen Henderson
Diane Smeltzer
Kathy Piracha
James S. MacLeod
Nansea Tomalty
Trudy Watts
Marilyn MacDonald**

Peter Ritchie
Marike Finlay

Correspondence from Constituent: Gregory MacKenzie

Dear Mr. Fraser,

Thanks for taking the time to reply once more; I appreciate it. As Christopher Hitchens said of Global Warming, we should act as if we are the cause because we cannot afford not to. The same can be said for the TPP as well as other issues which confront us.

Yes, I was able to make a submission to the International Trade Committee on the TPP. Very short, perhaps too short, and deliberately focused, for what is certainly a mountain of a document years in the making and one which has a broad scope. Perhaps I'll take another tilt at that windmill later on.

I am concerned by the push for fracking in Nova Scotia, which while on hiatus, the current moratorium is something that would be objected to by TPP signatories. I don't think fracking is in the public interest, particularly in a province such as ours where we rely on unspoiled nature to draw visitors every year, foreign investment and economic spinoff aside. It is not environmentally friendly and to risk poisoning our environment is unthinkable, we live here. As you may have noted in my submission to the International Trade Committee I am concerned that Canadian companies are using the ISDS to fight environmental law, etc. in other countries; using it in such a manner is pretty low.

Proportional representation interests me greatly. If anything is clear things cannot go on as they have been since Mr. Harper's contempt for parliament, and dare I say democracy, have laid bare the weakness in the Canadian version of the Westminster Model of government. If the Liberal Party and NDP had defeated the Conservative Minority government all those years ago and formed a coalition it might have spared us all much grief. This was allowable within the Westminster rules despite how the Harper government painted it. On the other hand Canadians then later got to see just how parliament could be abused and if Harper had got his way with the Supreme Court and its appointments he would have rewritten the constitution to suit himself, and things would have been far worse.

Fortunately that didn't happen.

Many thanks again for your reply,

Greg MacKenzie

Correspondence from Constituent: Damien Butler

Good day Sir,

I am one of the many people who voted you in during the October election, I had always voted Conservative before but was intrigued with all of the promises your Party made.

I was looking forward to change, I like the promises concerning the better treatment of Veterans, the openness and transparency of Govt, and was really excited that Trudeau was willing to go into a "Modest Deficit" to improve infrastructure which theoretically should boost our economy.

I am very skeptical of what the Govt is doing so far. The Modest deficit has ballooned to a HUGE one, Veterans still have to fight through red tape (temporarily?) and now it seems that the Govt is determined to change our Electoral system without consulting us, the people of Canada through a referendum.

Maryam Monsef outrageously stated that it is the 21st century and the hashtag #electoralreform had made 12 million impressions on twitter. What she doesn't seem to be aware of is how many using that hashtag support it, do not support it, how many are using multiple twitter accounts and are all of these impressions made by actual Canadians? During the election campaign I had noticed a lot of Non Canadians were tweeting about it.

Please take a look at this scientific poll performed by IPSOS, it is a much more reliable source then Twitter <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=7244> as you can see 73% of Canadians want their voices to be heard when it comes to changing how our Democracy works. It is not enough that electoral change was on the menu during the election campaign, that does not mean we have issued a blank cheque, we still want to be heard and represented properly.

The Arrogance with which PM Trudeau is running the Govt is absolutely unacceptable, Motion 6, Voter reform without referendum... I am beginning to feel like I made a HUGE mistake in voting for you and your party. Reminding me of a dictatorship to be quite honest.

Please speak to other constituents and get their opinion of whether or not a referendum should be done over electoral change and I am sure you will find that when people speak honestly, they want a say on any changes.

Thank you for your time,

Damien Butler

Correspondence from Constituent: Christine Briand

Hi Mr. Fraser,

I wanted to thank you for the open house you had on electoral reform at St.F.X. I appreciated the non-partisan explanation of the options in the beginning of the session.

I know you are hard at work trying to put together your report for Central Nova before the October 1 deadline for the Minister. Here are a few thoughts I had...

1. A referendum is a terrible idea. While it is true that everyone is entitled to an opinion, not everyone is qualified to make decisions with such long term impacts. Even a non-binding referendum, could muddy an already complex discussion. Please avoid this at all costs.
2. It is fine to lower the voting age to 16, but if that is done, you must reinstate funds to the Elections Canada Budget after the last government cuts. Possibly even increase the funding of education. Any change to the system will need to explained to voters. So the education would not only be limited to classroom aids, but YouTube videos showing a sample ballot and how to vote, etc.

3. Making every vote count is admirable, but we are a big country. In the last Federal election, the PM was decided before the polling stations were closed out west. For those citizens it was about deciding if they want to have a member with any power during a majority government. This is clearly unbalanced. With social media it is impossible hold back results. Would it be possible to have an Election - Vote day and then count the next day. We already have some way to secure the ballot boxes for advanced polls. If we could maintain that system have the vote on usual poll hours of 8-8 or 7-9 local time. Then the next day, the count starts nationwide at 12 noon Ottawa time - so 9 am in BC and 1:30 in Nfld.

I think this could work logistically, but might be financial nightmare as the boxes would have to be secured through the night and could lead to mistrust about the process.

I do feel that this time zone issue must have a solution, I just don't know what that might be.

4. Online voting would not be appropriate at this time, as many parts of rural Canada still have terrible internet and cellular access. Online voting would mean the entirety of the voting public would be trying to access the system at once. If you are in rural communities with dial up internet or you are part of Canada's families in poverty with no computers, online voting would be an unnecessary hurdle. Having to go somewhere to cast your vote would highlight you as someone in these groups and could stigmatize the process.

One of the great beauties of our electoral practice is that old or young, rich or poor, white collar, blue collar or underemployed, all of us get an equal vote. If there is any chance that online voting would, as I believe, disenfranchise certain voters - it should not be considered.

However, one solution would be that advanced paper ballots are run for a longer period and stop a few days prior to the actual vote, so that the online logs could be updated before voting day. That might help. And with electronic voting, the computer counts could start once all voting is done, regardless of time of day which could eliminate the west voting after the PM is decided.

Good luck and have a wonderful summer.

Christine Briand

Correspondence from Constituent: Judith Pink

Moving Canada Towards Proportional Representation

If we believe in the principle of "one man, one vote", then proportional representation in some form is desirable in the way Parliament operates. In many countries people vote for a local candidate and for a party separately, so that their parliament contains twice as many seats as local representatives.

1] It is undesirable to increase the number of MPs.

2] It is undesirable to reduce the number of constituencies, since Canada's population is (a) geographically spread out and (b) exhibits significant cultural diversity.

Accordingly, I am proposing a scheme that takes into account the above two considerations.

[1] MPs would be elected as they are now: first past the post in each riding.

[2] Each MP would have a “Total Voting Power” that is made up of (a) being elected and (b) their party association.

[3] The Total Voting Power of each MP would be composed of the following:

(a) voting power for being elected: 1

(b) voting power for party association. This number is derived as follows:

(i) take the percentage of the popular vote won by the party in question to calculate the hypothetical number of seats that it should have won.

(ii) subtract from this the number the actual number of seats that the party won. If this number is negative, no additional voting power is given.

(iii) divide this difference by the actual number of seats that the party won.

(iv) this number is then added to (a)

Let us consider how the 2015 Parliament would work differently under the proposed system.

Liberals: Actual number of seats won: **184**
 Percentage of the popular vote: **39.5%**
 Hypothetical number of seats that the party should have won: **134**
 Subtract: $134 - 184 = -50$
 This number is negative and so we make no change from a Total Voting Power per Liberal MP of **1**
 Total number of votes the party can have: **184**

Conservatives: Actual number of seats won: **99**
 Percentage of the popular vote: **31.9%**
 Hypothetical number of seats that the party should have won: **108**
 Subtract: $108 - 99 = 9$
 Divide this by actual number of seats that the party won: $9/99 = 0.09$
 Total Voting Power per MP: $1 + 0.09 = 1.09$
 Total number of votes the party can have: $99 \times 1.09 = 108$

NDP: Actual number of seats won: **44**
 Percentage of the popular vote: **19.7%**
 Hypothetical number of seats that the party should have won: **67**
 Subtract: $67 - 44 = 23$
 Divide this by actual number of seats that the party won: $23/44 = 0.52$
 Total Voting Power per MP: $1 + 0.52 = 1.52$
 Total number of votes the party can have: $44 \times 1.52 = 67$

BQ: Actual number of seats won: **10**
 Percentage of the popular vote: **4.7%**
 Hypothetical number of seats that the party should have won: **16**
 Subtract: $16 - 10 = 6$

Divide this by actual number of seats that the party won: $6/10 = 0.6$
 Total Voting Power per MP: $1 + 0.6 = 1.6$
 Total number of votes the party can have: $44 \times 1.52 = 16$

Green Party: Actual number of seats won: **1**
 Percentage of the popular vote: **3.5%**
 Hypothetical number of seats that the party should have won: **12**
 Subtract: $12 - 1 = 11$
 Divide this by actual number of seats that the party won: $11/1 = 11$
 Total Voting Power per MP: $1 + 11 = 12$
 Total number of votes the party can have: $1 \times 12 = 12$

Thus, the Liberals would have 184 votes out of a total 387, i.e. 48%, instead of the present majority of 54%. A coalition with the NDP or even the Green Party would give a majority.

For the 2011 election the proposed scheme would have yielded voting powers of 1 for each Conservative MP, 1 for each NDP MP, 1.71 for each Liberal MP, 4.75 for each BQ MP, and 12 for the Green Party MP. In this case only a coalition government could have been formed. The Conservatives with the BQ would have been slightly outnumbered by the combined voting power of the other 3 parties. Completely proportional representation would have given the NDP, with the support of the Liberals and the Green Party, a majority with 53% of the popular vote. It should be noted that the percentages of popular votes for the parties elected add up to 99.11%; the balance is made up of votes cast for unelected parties.

In summary, the advantages of this proposal are:

- there would be no change in the electoral process
- there would be no change in the number of ridings
- the degree of proportional representation ensures that all parties are more fairly represented
- this process does not involve the parties selecting arbitrary delegates