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## **Special Committee on Electoral Reform**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, September 29, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia**



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• (1340)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)):** Welcome, all, to the 33rd meeting of Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

We welcome Ms. Georgina Jolibois here today.

Thank you for joining us, I think you'll find it very interesting. We've had some great testimony, and it's an extremely timely and interesting topic.

I would like to welcome our two witnesses: Roderick Wood, professor, faculty of law, University of Alberta; and Patricia Paradis, executive director of the Centre for Constitutional Studies at the University of Alberta. We're very pleased that you are able to be here today.

Without further ado, we'll start with Professor Wood for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Roderick Wood (Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for your very kind invitation to appear today. I believe that a country that is willing to examine its electoral system is much stronger for doing so.

Twelve years ago, the Law Commission of Canada published its report on electoral reform. I was a commissioner with the Law Commission and I participated in the production of that report. What I wanted to do today was to talk a little bit about how it was that we came to the conclusion that we did. I can say that in the 12 years that have passed since the publication of the report I have not changed my view that the mixed member proportional system is a better choice than the existing system, and is to be preferred over other alternatives.

However, there is one element of the report that I have changed my mind about in light of new information that wasn't available at the time of the Law Commission's report. That is the issue of open lists versus closed lists, which I can talk about in a while.

In looking at the question, as law reform commissions do, we asked, "Is there a problem with the existing order?" What we heard was that there were severe concerns about the existing system. You are likely very familiar with these so I won't dwell on them, but briefly, the existing system results in disproportionality, the creation of artificial majorities, regional imbalances, and what the Jenkins commission referred to as the creation of electoral deserts, in which

whole regions of Canada may have little or no representation in the government. It results in the under-representation of women, minorities, and first nations peoples. It gives a sense of the lost vote—"Why should I vote? It's not going to be counted. It's not worth anything"—and may even lead to strategic voting, the feeling that you have to vote for a less preferred candidate because otherwise your vote simply wouldn't count. It can also lead to what is viewed as a hyper-partisan adversarial political culture in the country.

Having looked at these problems, our next step was to look at whether there might be some alternatives that would better address these concerns. In order to do so, we had to come up with some criteria, some political values that may be promoted in a given electoral system so that we could test the other models against these criteria. When I look at them, they seem congruent with the criteria mentioned in the mandate of this committee. We thought that fairness in translating votes to seats, proportionality, and giving citizens the sense that their votes will be counted were all important matters.

We looked at the promotion of regional balance. All parts of Canada should be represented in the government. We should try to avoid the electoral deserts or wastelands that can be created, which then sometimes pit one region of Canada against another. We wanted a system that would promote effective and accountable government and effective opposition.

We looked to demographic representation, the idea that the government should reflect the diversity of the people in the society, particularly women, minorities, and first nations people. We wanted a system that might better promote inclusive decision-making and consensus-building in place of adversarial partisan politics.

Having defined these criteria, we then looked at the different electoral models and tried to evaluate how they stacked up against these criteria. We looked at alternative voting and saw that it has benefits over the existing system. For us, the difficulty with alternative voting was in its disproportionality. It really didn't address the question of proportionality, and possibly it might make things worse. It didn't address the problem of regional balance. It didn't address the lack of diversity in terms of the representatives in government. So, we moved on and looked at systems of proportional representation. We looked at list PR systems, such as they have in Europe; the single transferable vote, used in municipal politics and for a time provincially in Alberta and Manitoba; and mixed member proportional representation, MMP.

•(1345)

What we concluded was that of those, MMP for us was the best choice. I think the key factor for us was the geographic representation that it provided, that direct link between the voter, the constituency, and the MP representing that. We thought it was important to retain that feature of the electoral system, and the MMP had that element, yet it also addressed the other problems we had identified. As for the lack of proportionality, it was addressed by MMP; the idea of the wasted vote, that was reduced in the system of MMP; the regional balance, that was addressed; under-representation of minorities and women... We saw in New Zealand there was a sharp increase in representation after the introduction of MMP in those countries. For that reason, we thought that MMP was a better choice.

Following that, we looked at criticisms that had been launched against MMP, to see if they carried any validity. The three criticisms that are often made against MMP are that it creates unstable governments, that it creates two classes of MP, the list MP and the constituency MP, and that it is susceptible of having a splinter group, a small political party holding the balance of power, which would be undesirable. We looked at that and we thought that these criticisms were exaggerated.

We looked at countries that do have MMP—Germany, Scotland, Wales, and New Zealand—and there's no evidence that their governments are unstable. Yes, they govern without having a majority, but they're not unstable democracies.

We looked at the argument of the creation of two classes of MP, the worry being that the list MP, not being voted in, would be the second-class citizen. We saw that wasn't the case. In Germany, in New Zealand, they're both MPs and their parties ensure that the list members have an equitable division in terms of constituency work. In fact, for voter choice it enhances them, because you can go to your constituency MP, you also have a regional MP you can go to, and that may be a person from a different party.

Finally, the splinter-party worry and domination by a tiny, little party...well, that's controlled through thresholds, so we concluded that simply wasn't a problem.

After doing this, after deciding on MMP, there are a number of technical issues you have to address, if that were the route you were taking. There'd be the question of the open list versus the closed list, or the semi-open list. A decision would have to be made about that; you would have to decide about dual candidacy. Can a person run both on the constituency list and also on the party list?

On threshold requirements, what is it? Is it two-thirds, one-third for constituency versus list, or should it be sixty-forty, fifty-fifty as in Germany, and on what basis do you make that determination?

Finally, on threshold requirements, how severe do you want to make it? The more severe you make it, the harder it is for new parties to come into existence. It's a check against the splinter parties, but you don't want to make it too hard. You must get that balance right.

In terms of implementation, we thought that essentially there had to be a broad consensus. There had to be a public consultation and a broad consensus. We did not think there must necessarily be a

referendum, although one should very carefully consider the possibility of a referendum on the matter.

One of the difficulties with a referendum, of course, is that in many cases, regardless of how much you try to have a public information campaign, many voters will not be informed and when it comes time to cast their votes it will be, better the devil we know than the devil we don't know, and first past the post will remain, out of inertia.

•(1350)

One possibility would be to have the referendum after the change. That may sound strange, but essentially what you'd be doing is offering people a trial period.

You'd say, "Voters, here's a new system. We've consulted broadly. This is what we are proposing to put in. Try it out for an election, and at the next election you'll vote on whether to retain it or revert to the old one." Then, voters would be voting fully informed. They would have experience with the old system and the new one. You would have an informed choice made by the electorate, which otherwise is difficult to achieve with electoral reform.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Professor Wood.

We'll go now to Ms. Paradis.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Patricia Paradis (Executive Director, Centre for Constitutional Studies, University of Alberta, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank you very much for the invitation to address the committee. It's a wonderful opportunity, and it's a great thing that we are actually engaging in the process in Canada. Thank you.

What I'm going to do is answer some of the questions that were put to us in the documentation you sent.

The first question was on why electoral reform is important.

The system in which Canadians elect their representatives to the House of Commons is, of course, foundational to the manner in which our democracy is realized. Our elected representatives significantly impact the ways in which we govern ourselves internally and the ways in which we function on the world stage. Therefore, Canadians must be confident that their electoral system is effective and that their votes are reflected in election results. They need to know that their votes count.

Electoral reform provides an opportunity for examination and evaluation of our current electoral system, with a view to changing it if it does not align with the expectations of the electorate. It is critical to our healthy democracy.

In terms of the strengths and challenges of Canada's current electoral system, I think my colleague has given you many of those. However, as you've heard from many people who have presented before you in the last number of weeks, no perfect system exists. Each has trade-offs, strengths, and weaknesses. No system is inherently more democratic than another.

My preference is for a proportional system. There are many of those, and many ways they can be implemented. There is no one way to achieve what people call "proportional".

There are questions that can be asked that invite comparisons, which will help us to find the best systems, questions such as these: Which system gives us the least fractious path to law-making? Which would least paralyze effective government? Which would push us most to months of post-election wrangling to create coalitions, and to the threat of evaporation of coalitions?

I'm not going to go through the advantages and disadvantages of each of the systems; I know you've heard these. I'm going to move on, then, to answer whether I consider Canada's current electoral system to be fair, inclusive, and representative, and I would say no on all three.

What do I think of mandatory voting?

Low voter turnout, I would suggest, is a systemic rather than a specific problem. Making voting mandatory is certainly not going to fix the problem. However, mandatory voting would engage more of the Canadian electorate in its fundamental democratic role. Making voting mandatory impresses upon people the importance and significance of voting. It is a community exercise, one that we participate in together for the greater good, the effective governance of our country.

As someone who runs the Centre for Constitutional Studies and who does research and public education on the Constitution, I'm constantly reminded of how little Canadians know about their democracy, their democratic system, and their Constitution. If mandatory voting would get them some small way towards understanding that a bit better, that would be great.

It is inevitable that online voting must be made available to the electorate. Voters want convenience with respect to voting, and online voting increases accessibility for those with disabilities. For example, remote online voting is already made available in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Canada is considered a leader in this regard. However, we must, of course, ensure that the system is designed to be secure, reliable, and, importantly, simple to use.

The big question that I'm going to attempt to answer today is what I think should be the future steps for electoral system reform.

First of all, as I understand it, this special committee will be tabling its report to the House. The extent to which the House itself can be brought to understand and appreciate the work that's been done by this committee, and to appreciate the number of Canadians who have stepped up to speak to you and give their points of view, and to consider your report, will be very important. If we could get some form of consensus or agreement within the House, that would certainly go a long way.

There will obviously need to be, at some point, a decision made regarding what electoral system we're going to choose for Canada.

• (1355)

Once that's done a strategy will need to be developed regarding reform, which will, of course, be contingent on the type of reform chosen. The decisions that need to be made, it seems to me, are going to be around the constitutionality of reform and whether constitutional amendment is necessary. If so, whether amendments can be made unilaterally or whether the general amending formula, which includes the provinces, the 7/50 formula, must be engaged. Then whether there should be a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada regarding the necessity for constitutional amendment if, indeed, there is a decision around constitutionality or that might in itself be a question one puts to the Supreme Court of Canada: is electoral reform a constitutional matter? Is the Canada Elections Act part of our constitutional architecture? Lastly, there will be a need to consider a referendum.

On the issue of constitutionality of electoral reform, does electoral reform require constitutional amendment? The Canada Elections Act would of course need to be amended, assuming a reform was suggested or recommended. The question is whether the government can simply table a bill or whether electoral reform requires constitutional amendment. That depends on whether reform of the electoral system is seen as constitutional in nature. The question is whether electoral reform fundamentally affects the role, functions, or the principle of proportional representation of the provinces in the House of Commons, which would affect the "structure of government that the constitution seeks to implement". I'm quoting there from a paragraph in the Senate reform reference. That's the Supreme Court of Canada decision from 2014. It laid out what the court means by "constitutional architecture". It's a very interesting decision.

Paragraph 26 of that decision talks about "the structure of government that the Constitution seeks to implement". The question is: would electoral reform affect the structure of government that the Constitution seeks to implement? My straightforward answer to that question is no, I don't see how it can engage the Constitution. But I know that you've heard from experts who have said it certainly does engage it, so I'm not purporting to be a legal expert in this regard. But clearly the nature and type of reform selected would impact this internal architecture.

Some argue that the electoral system is constitutional, given the Supreme Court Act reference and the Senate reform reference. The electoral system is not specifically included in the constitutional text, it's not referred to in the Constitution specifically, but some suggest that the impact of those two decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada is that the electoral system is part of our constitutional architecture.

My view is that these two references are different in substance than electoral reform. One was on the Senate, one was on the appointment of Supreme Court justices. The nature of reforms contemplated in the Senate reform reference for example would fundamentally alter its function. They were talking about electing senators, for example. Unless the electoral system proposed changes to the structure of government that the Constitution seeks to implement, in other words changes to the purpose, role, or function of the House, then it should not be deemed constitutional.

But if I'm wrong, and electoral reform is found to be constitutional, then how would we go about amending the Constitution? There are two ways. One is Parliament proceeds unilaterally using its exclusive jurisdiction under section 44 of the Constitution, or you go to the general amending formula, which includes the provinces. You've heard from experts, I know, who would say if you went to the 7/50 formula that would be the death knell for reform. The question you would need to ask, of course, is whether or not the nature of the reform you were proposing engaged the provinces' interests in such a way or changed the nature of the House in such a way that the provinces needed to weigh in.

The argument has been made that moving to a proportional system such as MMP would engage provincial interests to the extent that the general amending formula would be needed. Again, that would need to be determined, probably, if there were a question, by going to the Supreme Court of Canada. As views about whether and to what extent electoral reform engages the Constitution, a reference to the Supreme Court on this issue may be wise, especially if a proposed electoral system will change electoral boundaries.

● (1400)

Clearly, legal opinions on this subject need to be sought. A reference would provide certainty and would prevent constitutional challenges to processes, procedures, and legislation that would potentially take years to resolve in the courts. It would also provide legal legitimacy for the electoral system that is chosen.

I am suggesting that the time it takes to go to reference might be shorter than the time it will take to have challenges brought to the courts after the fact if no reference is sought.

This is a safe option but one that would significantly extend the time needed for the electoral reform process. I'll leave it at that.

As for a referendum, I'll just quickly say that there is no legal requirement for a referendum. It should be avoided if at all possible; that is, if processes can be put in place to ensure the political legitimacy of reforms, then avoid the referendum if possible.

My friend's suggestion of a referendum after a try-out period is one I had not heard, and it might be one that should be considered.

Barring a process or processes that can achieve the level of political legitimacy of a referendum, one should be held with the following caveats: of course—and you've heard this from others—a referendum should be carefully strategized; the question asked to the electorate should be clear and unambiguous; educating the public should be done in a non-partisan and objective manner; use of appropriate social media, television, and print media to provide neutral, accurate, accessible information to the electorate about

proposed changes is essential; and information needs to be presented in multiple formats and in clear, understandable fashion.

Planning for and executing a referendum will take time. It is a process that should engender pride in Canadians and trust in their government. It cannot and should not be rushed to meet an arbitrary deadline such as the next election.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll start our round of five-minute questions and answers with Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Thank you.

I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for being here today. It's a new day for us and a new province, and it's great to hear some of the Alberta perspective on this very important issue.

I'd also like to thank the members of the audience for joining us today and for taking time out to be part of the discussion. I hope you can stick around and be part of the open-mike session so we can get your thoughts on this.

It's great to be in the greater Edmonton area, so thanks for being here and joining us.

Ms. Paradis, I'm going to start with you. I really appreciate your comments. They give a bit of a different perspective from what we've heard recently, and the new information is always very welcome.

You were talking about the referendum question, and it has come up from time to time at our table. We've spent some time on things like legitimacy. You indicated that the process that we embark on could give electoral reform legitimacy, but if not, then a referendum could.

What steps do you think would be required to get to that legitimacy versus having a referendum?

● (1405)

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I was of course afraid you were going to ask that question.

**Mr. John Aldag:** I'm sorry, but I just had to go there.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Perhaps this is really pie in the sky, but given the nature of the way in which this committee has functioned, its composition, etc., when it goes back to the House, I'm just wondering if there could be some campaign or education process that would allow everyone in the House to actually understand the significance of what you've heard from Canadians so that everyone in the House could actually get on board so you won't have that strong partisan divisiveness in the House, and people will really step up to the plate and say, "You know, at the end of the day this is about our electoral process. This is very significant. This is how each one of us MPs actually got here."

If Canadians could see that the majority of people in the House had come to an agreement on proposed reforms, I wonder to what extent that would have an impact on Canadians. If, however, there is divisiveness in the House and you have, for example, one party saying that you must go to a referendum and the other saying that no, you don't, and on and on, then Canadians are going to wonder how we can get legitimacy, and where we can get it.

I think we need some guidance from the House.

**Mr. John Aldag:** On that, you mentioned having us take back to the House what we've heard from Canadians, yet one of the things we've struggled with is that if you look in the room—and I appreciate the turnout today—this doesn't represent all of Edmonton, let alone all of Alberta. I wonder how we get the greater input of the population. There are other elements to this; there are many prongs to consultation. There's an online piece right now, so any Canadian can provide their input, provide a submission to us to consider, but we're also hearing that not a lot of people are aware of this process, and a lot of Canadians aren't engaged in it.

With those barriers or challenges, do we need to do something else on this path to legitimacy?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** There are experts out there who strategize around these kinds of things, and we're very fortunate to be in the 21st century, with online availability as it is. One thing you might consider, because I'm definitely not in the camp of “let's go to a referendum”, is to come up with a strategy to try to engage the population. People have talked about citizens' assemblies and all of that, but there might be online ways to get people to engage. That would take some creativity.

I thought the way in which the government rolled out the census strategy was quite engaging. People actually did step up. It was mandatory, but the way it was done was interesting. So there are creative ways to do this, and maybe we need to look to third party experts.

**Mr. John Aldag:** That's excellent.

Professor Wood, I appreciated hearing in your opening comments your perspective on the work the Law Commission had done. You indicated that the one thing you had rethought was the list issue. If you could take the little bit of time I have left to expand on that, I think it would help set the stage for the rest of the conversation.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Briefly, with the closed list, the parties decide the ranking; with the open list, the voters decide. At the time of the report, we heard that voters in New Zealand said the parties shouldn't decide; the voters should decide the ranking. We were very concerned the proposal for MMP might hit headwaters because of that alone.

Since that time the New Zealand Electoral Commission has reviewed closed list versus open list. They found there was a change in view, and that over 60% of the respondents say the status quo is fine; they're comfortable with a closed list. So that was a big change, as well as the reasons I gave.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Would that be too big a step for Canadians to jump into? Would there be a transitional step to get there?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** On closed list?

**Mr. John Aldag:** Yes.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** I don't think so. If properly understood, it's not a problem. You have to understand that there's the constituency vote and the party vote, and when you're voting for the party, the party is setting up its view of its candidacy on that side. They're putting together their ranking of their people they think give the message of their values and ethos. It also allows them to adjust for diversity, and that should be promoted.

• (1410)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Reid, please.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Thank you to our witnesses. You've come from Edmonton, and we've come from Vancouver, so I guess it is an open question who was more inconvenienced by the fact that we're meeting here.

I want to deal very directly with the question of referendum. I should tell you that, from the point of view of my party and of myself, there is no possibility of what we would regard as legitimacy without a referendum and, to be clear, a referendum before as opposed to after.

The reason for saying before as opposed to after is easily illustrated by a number of analogies. Would it have been more legitimate for Quebec to separate in 1995 and then hold a referendum after the fact to see if people approved? The Brexit referendum has been frequently criticized. People don't like referendums, but would it have been better for the United Kingdom to separate from the European Union and then find out whether voters liked it? The Charlottetown accord is something similar. We were all told that this was something that was really good for us, we needed it, and it was going to resolve our national unity crisis. But in the end, voters rejected it, and I think it would have been very wrong to impose that on Canadians without having consulted with them first.

I want you to just imagine the problem that arises here. Let's say we decide we'll have a referendum after the fact. We'll put into place MMP. I'm not being disrespectful of MMP; I think of all the alternatives it's the one that probably makes the most sense for a variety of reasons. But let's say we put the new system in place, have an election, then have a referendum, and it turns out the majority of people don't support the system after we've just used it. They've effectively said that this system, the system in which you've just elected a government, was illegitimate and that, to some degree, the government elected by it has a legitimacy that's tainted. To me this just invalidates the whole thing.

Someone actually said, “Why don't you have the referendum at the same time as the new election?” Can you imagine if you get your system rejected and get a new government? What do you do then? So holding off the referendum so we don't find out what people think for a year or two, I don't see how that improves it. This is just a terrible idea, and it's clearly just not legitimate once one thinks it through.

Having said that, I do think the idea of having a referendum, approving a system.... That's what they did in New Zealand. They had a referendum, adopted a new system that the voters had approved, and then held a referendum a little while later to see if they still approved it. It turned out that, of course, they reinforced the decision they'd made about a decade earlier; they thought the system was a good one. That, I think, makes some sense, and it does establish that, whether we adopt a new system now or change that system after the fact, people are sovereign. That would be the observation I'd make.

The comments that you both made about the need for public education and really thinking that process through are absolutely legitimate. It's been repeated over and over again, including by people who were involved in the process in British Columbia where, of course, they did get a majority in favour of changing the system and would have changed the system were it not for their undemocratic 60% threshold. That's my rant. Thank you for listening.

In the two minutes I have remaining, Professor Paradis, I want to address the one constitutional issue that I think is paramount and that does take a number of our options off the table unless we want to go through dealing with the 7/50 system, and this is the principle of proportionate representation that is baked into our Constitution and cannot be changed without some form of amendment.

As long as we come up with a system that does not change the number of seats in the House of Commons—which is doable either under STV or MMP—I can't see a constitutional problem. But if you were to change and say we're going to have a top-up of 15% per province, which is one of the numbers that's been tossed out, you'd have to have it 15% for every province, it seems to me, or else you'd run into a problem. That is not necessarily easy to do, especially with the small provinces.

Can I just get your comment on the concern I have there? Is it legitimate or not legitimate in your view?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Are you referring to the section in the Constitution that specifically refers to the proportion that—

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I'm referring to section 52, where it says, "The Number of Members of the House of Commons may be from Time to Time increased by the Parliament of Canada,..."—so there's no problem so far—"...provided the proportionate Representation of the Provinces prescribed by this Act is not thereby disturbed."

I don't want to wind up adding seats in a way that causes Quebec's share, which is 25% now, to go to 24%, for example. To me that would be a clear violation of that principle. You have to keep the proportions where they are or else get a 7/50 amendment.

•(1415)

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Yes, I think if you affected the proportionality in the way that you've just described, you might well need a constitutional amendment.

But I think we need to really understand what is meant by proportionate. There are many different points of view on that issue. I can't state unequivocally that absolutely this would be the way to go. I really think that you'd need to get legal opinions on that subject because it's just not that clear.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I know I'm basically out of time, but just this quick thought. What would make the most sense if we were to attempt a model that involves increasing the number of members in the House? We actually would have to take that formula to the Supreme Court and ask for their reference: does this formula meet with your standard for how you define "proportionate"? Would you agree with me on this? Does that seem like a reasonable way to handle that?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Well, the question you'd have to ask the Supreme Court is whether or not that change would be constitutional. That would be your question. I am absolutely not certain that the Supreme Court would say yes, because we don't want to be in a situation in our country where we're expanding constantly what is constitutional. We want to continue to give Parliament its just due.

When it comes to numbers, numbers have been changed in the past without constitutional amendment. The thing that threw a bit of a wrench into the works was the Senate reform reference, because people have interpreted that to mean certain things. The one good thing about going to the Supreme Court is that maybe they'd clarify what they actually meant in that regard, and from a legal standpoint that would be great for us.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Professor Wood and Ms. Paradis. I am very pleased that you are here with us today on this major Canadian tour, which we are conducting to discuss the electoral system.

This committee has a mandate to study the many options that can be used to change the voting system, but also other issues concerning the electoral system.

Professor Wood, first I want to thank you for your work with the Canadian Law Commission in 2004; this is an excellent report. You are still in favour of these recommendations for a mixed-member proportional system.

I also want to thank you for your helpful suggestions for combating certain myths that circulate about mixed-member proportional voting systems. You say, for example, that this kind of system produces stable governments, preserves a local connection between voters and members, and does not cause an excessive increase in the number of small political parties represented in the House.

With regard to the connection with voters, the report states that, in Germany, even list members have close relations with their fellow citizens. They have offices, they receive people, they meet with the organizations of civil society, and they deal with individual files. As Mr. Broadbent said, this voting system may be the best of all possible worlds because it offers the advantages of both proportional systems, majority and mixed-member.

You have changed your mind about closed and open lists. I find that interesting. I used to be more in favour of closed lists but am beginning to lean toward open ones. On what regional basis do you think lists should be constituted?

It is perfectly understandable why there might be a list for Nova Scotia, for example, but regional realities are very different in Ontario and Quebec. How would you divide up members who are elected on a broader regional or, in some instances, provincial basis?

● (1420)

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** We proposed that the list, except for Quebec and Ontario because of the size of those provinces, would be on a regional basis, so you would have your provincial list. What that would mean is that if you have a province like Newfoundland and Labrador with seven MPs, then there would be four constituency MPs and three list MPs. Every province would have its own list. That was regional MMP, as you would have in Scotland.

By doing that you eliminate the need for overhang seats like you have in Germany and New Zealand, although I think they are proposing to do away with the overhang in New Zealand.

It would be on a regional basis. One problem was, what about the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon?

What we proposed was that you have to add another list MP. You can't have a regional basis with only one constituency MP. That would increase the size of the House by three.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Only by three, which is not too much.

In a mixed-member proportional system, you vote on two ballots: you vote for your local MP and you vote for the party list. What is your opinion about double candidacy?

This summer, we heard from former Quebec minister Mr. Pelletier in Ottawa. There was a process in Quebec that was created by the National Assembly. It faltered partly because people were afraid of losing regional power and because it was proposed that an individual could be a candidate both in a riding and on the list. It was very poorly received. People said that, if an MP was not elected in his district, he should not be able to slip through via the list.

What do you think of that?

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** It is a matter of some controversy. The worry was with the backdoor candidate. You get voted out on Friday, and you're back in on the list on Monday. That's how people refer to it in New Zealand. New Zealand and Germany do allow dual candidacy, and I think there is a good reason for it.

What you find is that without it people either want high on the list or safe seat. You want to have candidates contesting the ridings. If not, they still have a chance to be chosen on the list.

What you see in Germany and New Zealand is that 80%, or so, are dual candidacy. Yes, there is that perception—and it's discussed in the 2012 New Zealand report—but they concluded that dual candidacy was fine.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Monsieur Ste-Marie.

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon, Ms. Paradis and Mr. Wood.

Thank you for coming to speak with us. It is very interesting to listen to you.

I also want to say hello to the people in the audience. We are eager to hear from you.

I want to say hello to my colleagues, particularly Ms. Jolibois, who has joined us today and is doing a remarkable job.

Ms. Paradis, you said that, if you want to carry out electoral reform, it always takes more time than you expect and it is therefore better to do it right and come up with a reform that works than to rush the process to meet an electoral deadline. Is that correct?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Yes, that is what I said.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Wood, I would like to know whether you agree with that.

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Yes.

● (1425)

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Wood, in response to my colleague Mr. Boulerice's questions, you said that, in your model, you would add a seat to each territory. So for there to be a proportional system, there would be three more seats.

Ms. Paradis, from a constitutional standpoint, are the territories like provinces? For example, could there be one or two MPs for all the territories, or do you really have to go by territory?

[English]

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I can't see how that would create a constitutional problem. At the end of the day, we have to keep our system working. It seems to me that this is just a logical approach. That's my opinion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

We can put that question to the court, if we want to ask long questions that result in long response times.

Mr. Wood, once again in your mixed-member proportional system, would there be an option to reserve seats for the First Nations, by province, where the demographics warrant it? What do you think of that idea?

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** We considered that as a possibility in the report, although we didn't put the mechanism in. We said that it would require a whole different order of discussions and conversation. We didn't want to rule it out, but we said that, at this point, we were dealing with the electoral system, and that element would have to be studied later and independently. It has a number of other issues. We certainly didn't want to rule it out.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Wood, in British Columbia, a citizens assembly was established and worked hard for a year. Is that an avenue that should be explored?

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** It is certainly a possibility. The advantage of it is that you can get citizens who do have the time to study the particular system in detail and make an informed choice. As I said, the difficulty with a referendum is having an informed vote on the question. I think there might even be a greater chance of that if people in a referendum say, "Well, I trust the instinct of those who were involved in this as an assembly." That might be an antidote, in part, to the problem of the referendum, where people are simply not informed. There is actually a possibility of a combined effect.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

In the mixed-member proportional system that you present, the party in power would go from a majority to a minority situation, in which it would constantly have to have the support of third parties to be able to govern.

What would be the best arguments that could be advanced to convince the party in power to adopt a new reform? After all, by losing power, it would be the first loser.

[English]

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Well, first past the post is also cruel to them, because they won't be the winners forever. The tide will turn, and they'll find themselves on the losing side. They might find their party virtually wiped out because of the vagaries of first past the post. You might find them leaderless, because their leader isn't even in the House. I think that, if you take the long view of things, you'll recognize that it's not just the next election. You have to think the bigger game on this, and you'd say, well, we are better off, as a party, over the long run with a different system.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** That is very interesting.

It was in England, in Great Britain, that the Labour Party, which had dominated for decades, finally gave way to other parties. Consequently, proportional voting might have a beneficial effect for the survival of the present government.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Duly noted.

Ms. May, go ahead, please.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses who are with us today in Leduc, Edmonton, and thank you to all the members of the audience who are here.

This is such helpful testimony, and I wish I had more than five minutes. I want to thank you so much, Professor Wood. We also had the great honour of hearing from Bernard Colas, who was involved in the Law Reform Commission. I take to heart the approach the Law Commission took, because it helps us find our way forward as MPs at the moment when we have to sit down and decide which of these systems meet which of our standards and our most important principles. Clearly, fairness is a primary concern, no matter what system of voting we move to.

Because this is a novel recommendation, and one that I have been personally interested in, I want to direct my questions to Patricia Paradis. I am very grateful to you for raising the idea of a reference question to the court. It has occurred to me in the past that this might be a useful thing to do, both to add weight on the legitimacy side of this question and to allay any concerns that we are tripping into any perceived constitutional tripwires. I have a background in law—obviously not as distinguished as your own. It doesn't seem to me that there is a constitutional question here, but that concern could be laid to rest.

Why do you think that a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada would delay our process? The court will either say, "We are taking the reference question", or it will say, "We don't think there as a question to be answered, so we are setting it aside." It seems to me that it could be done relatively quickly.

● (1430)

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I agree, it could be done relatively quickly or not, it depends on the court. We did wait some time for the Senate reform reference decision to come through. I seem to recall it was almost a year. It's if you're willing to wait that length of time and, frankly, a year is not that long.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** In terms of our process and I'm thinking very operationally, but, of course, the Senate reform reference as well as the Supreme Court's review of judicial appointments clearly touched on constitutional law matters. They're a clearly different class of discussion. As a matter of fact, if you go right back, as I'm sure you know, to the British North America Act in its original form, it said the new British North America will vote as Westminster votes—

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Yes.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** —until the Canadian Parliament decides what voting system they want. It's never been.... But, as you said, there's some cloud created by the Senate question of the Supreme Court's ruling. It just strikes me that might be a way to give greater gravitas to the decision that parliamentarians, I believe, have every right to make.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I completely agree.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Okay, that's very helpful.

Then I will have time to ask you a question, Professor Wood. The Law Commission in several places in its report dismisses the idea of multi-member ridings. Two days ago in Victoria we heard from two members of the B.C. citizens' assembly who are very firm in their view that the Law Commission had made a mistake in so quickly setting aside the proportionality benefits, the fairness questions, and so on of single transferable vote and multi-member ridings.

Can you recall why it was the Law Commission felt in its review that multi-member ridings were not desirable?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** On the question of STV, although perhaps we could have dealt with it at greater length in the report, it's not because we didn't consider it, it's just that you have an over 200-page report and you have to make choices.

We did consider it and it satisfies a number of the criteria in terms of proportionality and the like, it's just that we thought MMP did it better. It had a greater link with the geographic representation. In terms of the ballot, there's a complexity in the STV ballot. It's probably the most complex in completing. In fact, that was one of the reasons I've changed my mind in favour of the closed list. It's because the open list creates a complex ballot. When you look at New Zealand it's simple, vote for the party, vote for the constituency candidate. It's really simple. That's important, the ease of use, it really is important.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Yes.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** I suppose, as well, in terms of countries that use STV, my impression is that it probably works better in smaller jurisdictions or smaller settings, where it's really the candidate who counts. That's why you see it used in municipal politics where I think it first arose. So for those reasons, it's not that we thought STV was bad, we just thought that something else was better.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** That's helpful.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Ms. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes, Lib.):** Thank you so much, and I'd like to thank our two panellists for being here today and also the members of the public who came out on a sunny day here in Alberta.

We heard some conflicting comments and I'd like to get your opinion. You have very distinct competencies and skills that you'll bring to the table in helping to clarify this. We've had folks come to see us to say—and we've heard it quite often—that they felt that their vote didn't count, that their voice didn't matter.

Yesterday, we heard from a witness who said, in fact, no matter what system you put in place there's always going to be that one candidate or that one person who said my candidate didn't win. Because, say, for instance, you have seven candidates running in an election and you have an MMP, you're choosing three, then there are four who didn't win. And if somebody out there voted for them, then meeting that requirement of making sure their vote counted means everybody who got a vote should be a member of Parliament. It's taking it to one extreme.

How do we make sure folks understand that just because you voted for someone, it doesn't mean they necessarily should become an MP, not that they don't deserve to be an MP, but there are going to be times when someone didn't win something.

Could you elaborate your thoughts on that? I have a follow-up question.

Professor Wood.

• (1435)

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** We looked at the wasted vote. We thought that first past the post accentuated that, because if you don't vote for the winning candidate, it's pointless. With mixed member proportional, you can see that the relationship is that your vote ended up electing the list candidate. You can see that your vote wasn't wasted; it did count. I think if people can understand the operation of the system, they'll say, well, yes, collectively we voted for this party; this party benefited from that with extra seats in the House. I believe that absolutely. If your constituency candidate doesn't win, well, that's life and that's politics, but your vote should count for something in terms of reflecting the final distribution of seats in the House; that's the element of proportionality.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Ms. Paradis, what do you think of that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I would agree with that, and you're quite right; obviously, not every vote is going to count, but it's important for Canadians to know that there might be more than one approach, and that is the benefit of this MMP system.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Speaking of that, Ms. Paradis, you mentioned that so many Canadians don't understand their democracy.

With regard to the education component, I think Canadians are incredibly savvy and incredibly smart. I think that for whatever it is we're going to propose, whatever comes out of this exercise, a large educational component will be required, whether that has to do with changing the voting system or with tactics that we employ to increase voter participation or whatever it is that we do.

Who do you think is best placed to make sure that education is done well, in a way that it is non-partisan and fair, so that all sides of the issue are put forward—the good, the bad, and the ugly—along with the ramifications of whatever it is that we choose. We have heard that, obviously, the people sitting around this table, the political parties, advocacy groups, and others have a vested interest in whatever is being put forward. Do you think Elections Canada would be best placed to provide that education component?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I haven't given this a great deal of thought. I don't think Elections Canada should have to do that work. It seems to me that if you're really looking at a strategy for informing your electorate, you're going to use many different approaches, not just one. One is, obviously, to get into the schools and to look at the curriculum. It's about time we started teaching about the Constitution and the charter. People tend to think the charter is the Constitution. They don't understand that it fits into a much larger thing. Getting into the schools and getting students informed is one way.

There are many, many others. Hearing you say these things is music to my ears, because this is something our centre tries to do. Of course, one tiny little centre in the middle of Edmonton, Alberta isn't going to do it. With online technology now there are so many more opportunities available. We're working, for example, with the National Film Board right now on a web-based project that will be available to 16- to 24-year-olds on the patriation, hearing from Peter Lougheed as he then was, etc. There are many different ways to do it; I just don't think Elections Canada should be responsible for all of it.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madame and Monsieur, it's a real pleasure for me to meet you.

I think we are the first ones to recognize that the electoral system is not perfect, but there is no perfect system.

[*Translation*]

If it existed, we would have it,

[*English*]

as we say in French. But this is the true reality.

There are some things that exist about the so-called proportional system. You know, this is the panacea for so many people, but the reality is not there. The problem we face with our system many times is the same with the proportional system.

[*Translation*]

The experts acknowledge that changes in voting systems do not really have an impact on voter turnout rates. It is more the election issues and personalities that increase turnout, not the electoral system.

However, it is generally recognized that a proportional system means there are more small parties than in a regular system, which is not bad in itself. That is called "democracy". I will come back to that a little later.

[*English*]

Talking about the strategic vote, we heard so many people say in the last election that we needed a strong strategic vote to get the Conservative government out and all that stuff. I know what I'm talking about; I'm a Conservative MP. I heard that a lot, but not in Quebec City, because I won. But I recognize that. This is why I have the authority to say that.

Whatever the system, whatever reality we'll see, people will say, I want to get this government out, and the best way is to have one

party that will attract the most votes. Whatever the system, you will see that people will vote strategically. Sure, I recognize that in the actual system more people will vote strategically than in the other system, but you will not erase it; that's the reality of democracy.

[*Translation*]

Now I am going to talk about the lost vote. I am sorry, but no vote is lost in a democracy, except if a person does not vote. A losing vote is not a loss. That is the difference. There will always be winners and losers. That is what happens in real life. If everyone votes for the same person, then everyone will win. Otherwise it goes without saying that there will always be losers. It is not because people lose that their votes are permanently lost. A losing vote is not a lost vote.

Nearly 99% of Canadians who vote have a voice in the House of Commons, and that is because they voted for one of the five parties represented there. Everyone in my district is represented in the House of Commons. Furthermore, even though it is a small number, 1.8% of the people in the district of Louis-Saint-Laurent voted for the Green Party and are represented in the House. I have never heard anyone say that his or her voice had been eliminated and that that was a terrible thing. No, their voices are there and very well represented by Ms. May. I do not think she is listening to me. That is unfortunate.

[*English*]

Okay, maybe one day she will understand that.

[*Translation*]

Here is my question.

[*English*]

Yesterday, Mr. Mayrand, Chief Electoral Officer, said that what we need in this country if we decide to change the electoral system—I think Mr. Mayrand is a partisan of that issue—we shall have a lot of support in this country.

There are two options for him. One is the support of 75% of members of Parliament or a referendum. What do you think of that?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I thought it was an interesting suggestion. If you can get 75% support in the House, that would be great. What I don't know is whether or not the Canadian electorate would be sufficiently swayed by that 75% vote to feel that the new system was legitimate. Now coming from Monsieur Mayrand—

[*Translation*]

I entirely agree

[*English*]

—one would think that he knows what he's talking about. However, a referendum and a 75% vote in the House are very different. Clearly, there's a lot less risk with the 75% vote in House.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Wood, what do you think of what Mr. Mayrand said?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Having not heard what he said, I'm not sure where the figure of 75% comes from.

•(1445)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** It's the system they have in New Zealand. He said that the New Zealand system says you can change it if you have 75% support.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Okay.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** He referred to that.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Yes, 75 or two-thirds, higher or lower, I'm not sure where you draw that. In terms of legitimacy, we see that in our history. In this province, electoral reform was put in in the 1920s without a referendum. It was changed again in the 1950s without a referendum. Then in Manitoba, single transferable vote was eliminated without a referendum. When we look at the biggest electoral change in Canada in all of its history—giving women the vote—that was done without a referendum.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Is it true that, in the last decade, three provinces asked for a referendum to make some changes to the term?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Yes.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I was afraid that you would forget that.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** No, absolutely not. My only point was that there are instances where there haven't been referendums.

With the Law Commission's report we said a referendum should be considered. That's a choice, and legitimacy is a concern.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. DeCoursey, please.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
[Translation]

I want to thank the speakers and the people in the audience.  
[English]

Professor Wood, yesterday Professor de Rooij from SFU spoke to us about how proponents of proportional representation systems generally say they are looking for greater representation of views in Parliament. We've also heard it plenty of times in the different testimonies. However, perhaps they are actually saying that they are looking for a greater expression of their public policy view within the policy agenda of government, and that the two sometimes don't deliver. Greater representation of voices in Parliament doesn't always deliver a greater representation of the voters' public policy view. We've heard people deliver similar testimony, and we've heard people deliver an opposite testimony.

With your experience in your study with the Law Commission, do you have any view on how a greater representation of a diversity of political views in the House does or does not necessarily generate a greater expression of the public policy view of the voters who elected those representatives?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** We did not deal with that to a great extent. We did note that the current system punishes parties that have dispersed national support. The Green Party would be a case in point. It's very hard in that despite having a large segment of the proportion of the vote, you get one or zero seats.

That would be an example of how the fact that the current system is not kind at all to parties unless they are regionally concentrated might affect the diversity of views. There would be other examples as well, but that's the one we focused upon.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** But on the issue of whether it delivers the public policy that people are looking for, making the direct correlation is a bit iffy?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** There's some suggestion, or I've heard it said, that where you have a system of first past the post, which may work badly, or where you have two dominant parties shifting back and forth in power, you would have the problem of controversial parties put in, a change in power, and those policies taken out. There's some thought that this is inefficient, with a possible cycle of build it up and rip it down, build it up and rip it down. If there was something that didn't promote the majority putting forward their agenda, and that had more of a consensus where you needed it, a consensus of the other party, that effect might be more muted.

•(1450)

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you.

Ms. Paradis.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I have nothing to add.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Okay.

I want to revisit this whole idea of legitimacy in the process. I'm not a legal scholar. My background is largely in communications, so I recognize that the perception of what we're doing, leading to legitimacy or not, is very important in the view of Canadians. Is the idea of finding consensus in this committee an important element of building legitimacy in this process, in your mind?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** That's an interesting question.

Well, it depends on what you mean by consensus. If you mean everyone agreeing, you might never get there. What's really healthy in a democracy, of course, is a lot of debate and discussion. If you could all come to some agreement based on whatever, not every single person might agree, but I think that would certainly lend legitimacy.

At the end of the day, your report will be a report of the committee, whether you all agree or not. That is what will go back to the House. Am I correct in that?

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** It would seem to me, however, that the discussions you have here will inform how this whole issue of electoral reform will be approached in the House and therein beyond, because you're a microcosm of the House.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** One of the suspicions I have—maybe it's not such a suspicion anymore, as it's been iterated quite clearly today—is that to achieve legitimacy, the question of a referendum might necessarily need to be a part of a consensus report coming from this committee.

In your mind, would it positively inform the conversation in the House if we could come to some set of recommendations that presented an alternative to the current system but also with a view that a referendum might be legitimate and Parliament could figure out a way to put together a process where a well-resourced referendum would help inform Canadians and provide them with the best opportunity to ultimately decide on an alternative electoral system for Canada?

Maybe I've just been travelling too long, and have been into this too deeply over the last three months, but....

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** You come here at the end of your time.

**The Chair:** Yes, pretty much.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** No, that was an excellent question.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** It's a reality we may face.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** It may be a reality you face, but if you can explore other options....

The question was put, what do you need for political legitimacy? You need the Canadian electorate to really believe and trust that this system will actually work. That's all you need. It's not a legal question, it's really a political question.

So I'm not sure you have to go to a referendum, but you'd have to explore other options. I wasn't very good at giving you any other suggestions, either.

**The Chair:** That was a good answer.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thanks for the effort. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Madam Jolibois.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP):** Thank you.

I'm curious, Professor Wood. Did I hear you correctly about the first nations and the Métis and that it needs to...? You haven't spent a whole lot of time on what that would look like?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Has anyone, to your knowledge?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Well, our report dealt with electoral reform. We had a chapter that talked about it, but it would require further negotiations and discussions. We said that this should be encouraged, but this really wasn't something that we were dealing with in that particular report.

We looked at some other countries that did it, such as New Zealand, with the participation of the Maoris in their legislature. We talked about that, but really, our task was to look at the electoral reform system and propose something on that. We thought that we couldn't go off in this other direction as far as we would like.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** I'm having a hard time gelling that.... I'm a Canadian. I'm a first nation. I come from an area of predominantly first nations and Métis communities in northern Saskatchewan. I'm trying to figure out what this looks like with any system in terms of the kinds of changes that we want to see. How will it increase voter participation?

It makes me nervous about online, because the assumption is that every part of Canada has access to Internet. We know they don't. It doesn't matter what province or territory you're in. Not everyone has access to that. It doesn't allow for every Canadian to have access.

Are there any other thoughts and suggestions?

• (1455)

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** About the online?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** On the online, I think people need to have the choice of online or not. I don't think you have to make everything online.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** That's not fair representation. That's not fair for every Canadian, especially the new immigrants, the first nations, and the Métis, and the list goes on.

I'm a first nation and I have yet to speak my first language in the House of Commons, yet my family, my relatives, were the first people here. It's unfair. I'm looking for a system. I want to see change—I do—to increase the MPs in the House of Commons....

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** As a first step in a more proportional system—something like MMP with a closed list—what we do see is that there are more women, minorities, and first nations people elected.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** The current system doesn't work like that. I'm lucky that I'm here.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** In New Zealand, where they did change, that was the effect, so that would be a first step. There are obviously a whole lot of other things, then, that have to happen, but I think that as a first step you need to be in the House.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** I'm just trying to figure out what that looks like. What you said earlier is that you haven't figured out the first nations and Métis participation, yet we're Canada. This is Canadian democracy that we're talking about. I have the right, as a Canadian, to choose who my MP or my representative will be. Every Canadian has that right, but yet the system.... I'm really curious to know....

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** This is one of the things that maybe doesn't specifically involve electoral reform, but certainly, the nomination processes in each party might need to be looked at.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** I see it differently. I would encourage more universities across Canada, and more lawyers and different law societies, to really entertain this idea and to come up with a really good solution or a way to encourage this so that every Canadian, first nation, and Métis has access, has the right to vote and participate, not necessarily online, because not every Canadian has access to that option.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our participants, both in the audience and on the panel.

I'd like to allow you, Ms. Paradis, to finish an earlier point that you ran out of time on. At least, I didn't think you had finished. The question of legitimacy was discussed in an earlier question. We talked about a referendum as one possible means of ensuring legitimacy.

You also contrasted that with this idea of 75% of the members of the House. You said there was “less risk”. Those were your final words there, and I thought, “risk of what?” I’d like you to elaborate on what you meant by that.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** One of the criticisms of referendums is that you do take a risk because the question sometimes is not posed in a manner that people understand completely, or there might be a skewed result. There are all kinds of reasons that a referendum, if it’s not carefully thought through, can end up with problematic results.

Once you have a referendum the people have spoken. A referendum is a loud shout.

It’s a huge endeavour. It’s not without risk, but it is also one that, if properly carried out, could be a wonderful affirmation by the people of Canada.

• (1500)

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Indeed, and I absolutely agree that there are many challenges with referendums. The clarity of a question is probably one of the most important things. Having a referendum conducted properly, to ensure that the will of voters is expressed clearly, is perhaps a difficult undertaking.

And yet when I hear concerns about a problematic result what I hear is the concern about having a referendum because one might not get the answer one wants. If the question is put correctly and if the evidence is understood, there is no such thing as a problematic result. The result is going to be the will of those who are deciding through the referendum.

I’ve heard this repeatedly through the debates that we’ve had and it troubles me, this assumption that the only just result is the result that one advocates. You don’t always get what you want in democracy. If you did, we wouldn’t need democracy and we wouldn’t need elections because we would all just agree with each other about everything. Democracy, whether through referendum or in a representative democracy, is a tool by which we agree to govern ourselves and there is sometimes disagreement.

I, too, agree with your earlier statement. I would love to see consensus at this committee or in the House on any number of items. I think any legislator who ever passed or ever tabled a bill or a motion hoped there would be consensus and that people would agree with them and support it. But the reality is that there are sometimes opposing views that can’t be reconciled and this is the business of governance: how to have orderly government and as best as possible, how to allow government to function with the support of people.

These are very difficult questions. As many of the other experts who have spoken to our panel have already stated, there is no magic solution and no matter what system we may end up moving toward, there will be trade-offs and there will be difficulties and people will ultimately remain unsatisfied and think that the system is not perfect.

If I may just switch gears completely to the first point you spoke about—or maybe it wasn’t your first but it was early in your opening remarks—I would like to talk about online voting. We had an expert speak to us yesterday who very strongly made a very compelling case. I see all the nods around the table of those who heard it. The witness completely scared the whole room and the committee around the possibility of an election being hacked, and maybe an election

being hacked without our knowledge of it being hacked. A country could wake up and find that two years ago the election result that happened was in fact a fraudulent or a hacked result.

This witness was very compelling and there weren’t too many people left in the room who had much interest in online voting when she was done. It was characterized by one of my other panellists who asked if there were ways to make it safe, and ways to mitigate, and the analogy was that any such exercise is similar to talking about how to make drunk driving safe, and that there is no way to do it.

Can you suggest a secure...?

**The Chair:** Do you have a brief reply to that?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** It will really be for this committee to decide on those issues because you are hearing from experts, so I trust what this committee is going to come up with. It just seems intuitive that, at this point in time in our history with what’s going on online, we would do that. But is any system ever completely secure?

**The Chair:** You did mention in your opening comments, if I recall, that this was with the caveat that it be secure.

• (1505)

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** Yes, and reliable, exactly.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We’ll go to Ms. Sahota, please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question will be kind of along the lines of I think what my colleague was asking. We went to an aboriginal community a couple of days ago in Victoria and we were talking about the idea of having assigned seats set out for aboriginal communities, perhaps for females, for minorities, whatever you can think of. Did the Law Commission take a look at this proposition? If so, how would that fit into an MMP-style system?

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** Yes, I think you’d want to look at New Zealand as a model, because they’ve done that. We just didn’t think that we could complete the process that would take us along that path in the time that we had for the report. That’s why we said this kind of thing could be accommodated with MMP, but first you need some idea or some consensus about the need to change to another system before you get to that next step in terms of devoted seats for first nations people. We do talk about it in the report, but as I said, it was put off, saying that there would have to be more steps that would later be taken.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** One of our factors of our mandate that we’re looking at is inclusivity. I find it hard. I know with the Law Commission’s recommendations, you had basically left all that stuff up to the parties. Diversity and aboriginal inclusion are left up to the parties. It’s up to the parties, really, to include them into lists. It’s not mandated that they have to set aside a certain number of seats. That’s something that we could even look at today within the current system and perhaps implement that.

If we're going through all that trouble to implement a new system, why would we not set something like that right in place? When I look at the numbers, yes, MMP systems might be doing slightly better with female representation, but I don't know if necessarily the other categories are doing incredibly great, other than that New Zealand example where they have set aside seats for the Maori.

Why would we not perhaps look at that? You must have had some presentations or interesting thoughts along those lines, even though you didn't put them into your report as a recommendation. You must have some ideas about how to go about it.

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** We did look at other countries, and some of them did put requirements that a number of list candidates have certain qualifications, attributes, and the like, so it certainly could be done. It's not something that can't be done within the system.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Do you think Canada would find that to be democratic to have seats set aside for specific people?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I think that it's a substantive equality issue, personally, and I think it's a very good idea. I think you have to sometimes just take the road. You have to take affirmative steps in that direction if you want to effect change. You just can't wait for things to percolate up. That's just a personal opinion.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Yes, we've had some suggestions that we should have gender-balanced ridings, I guess. You know, one riding runs all-female candidates, one runs all-male candidates, and that should be put in place, and that's maybe one way of getting that gender balance. There have been other unique ideas, but that's kind of what I was looking for, if there were any unique ideas.

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** When you see what the Liberals have done with requiring a certain percentage of cabinet ministers to be female, that has made a difference. It takes positive, proactive action.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Yesterday we had a professor come by from UBC, Professor Kam. He referred to a situation of dissatisfaction in Japan on the closed list system, in which people are frustrated with certain candidates. I know that in your recommendations you haven't eliminated double candidacy. A person could run in a constituency seat and could be on a list as well. Even if they lose, they can still get in through the list, if their party puts them high enough.

Would Canada see that as an appealing system? He was saying there is some frustration in Japan over—what have you—corrupt politicians who get in no matter what and, therefore, don't have accountability. No matter what the people do, they just can't get them out.

• (1510)

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** The most recent report from New Zealand looked at dual candidacy and whether that happens. The report found that it doesn't. In fact, when candidates lose their constituency and end up on the list, it's almost an endgame. You find that they don't end up on the list that much longer; they tend to retire. What it found in terms of the list candidates is that if they lose their constituency seat but get a list seat, chances are they're going to be leaving by the next election.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That ends our round of questioning.

I just have a couple of questions I would like to indulge in.

By the way, I'm neutral and agnostic on all this, but I haven't stopped being a thinking being.

In terms of the issue of what Mr. Mayrand said, I'm a little confused. I'm trying to clarify that. Yesterday a CBC article said, "Mayrand stopped short of endorsing a referendum on electoral reform..." I didn't hear his comments. It goes on to say, "...but conceded that is one way to find consensus."

I don't know what the answer is to that.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** First of all, it wasn't yesterday; it was the day before yesterday. It was in his report on the 42nd general election. He issued a report, and in it he said that one way of dealing with this, the way he thought was the best, was to adopt the New Zealand approach. In New Zealand, they say they won't change their electoral...either one or the other. I think that's what was actually said.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** With the greatest of trepidation, I wonder if I can ask one question of the witnesses about this 75% threshold. I think that under our Constitution it says that House of Commons votes are 50% plus one. I'm wondering if that idea transported from New Zealand actually offends the Constitution, but I may not be allowed to ask that question of the expert we have before us. It might be our last chance.

**The Chair:** I could ask.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** What do you think about that?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I honestly don't want to weigh in on that as a so-called constitutional expert.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have a couple of other questions, if I may, or comments, really.

Somebody mentioned that if we change the electoral system, we might have to engage the provinces through the amending formula.

Do you feel that certain systems that are being considered would be seen as inherently good for the provinces, in terms of giving them more power, which would make it less likely for them to disagree with the change? It's a question that hasn't come up in all our hearings. Anyway, it's just food for thought.

The other comment I'd like to make is regarding the idea that a proportional system somehow changes the mood and makes everybody more consensus oriented. I lived through three minority governments as a sitting member, which is essentially what you'd have with proportional representation. It wasn't always pretty; I can tell you that. It was as rough as it gets. We live in a North American political culture where politics is almost like a boxing match south of the border. I'm wondering whether that affects our whole perception of politics and how we do politics. That's one question. I don't expect a definitive answer.

The other comment I'd like to make is that a while ago, I watched the very first televised question period—in 1979, I think it was.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** It was 1977.

**The Chair:** It was a majority Liberal government under first past the post, and it was an exchange. The first question came from Mr. Clark to Mr. Trudeau, and it was one of the most inspiring and respectful exchanges I've ever seen. This was in the first past the post system and essentially at the cusp of television coverage of politics. Sometimes I wonder if television has made politics more combative, regardless of the system, and even more so in the North American political culture where competition is sometimes stark.

Those are just thoughts. I find, throughout these hearings, that we often abstract from the political culture in which we operate.

• (1515)

**Mr. Roderick Wood:** I agree that under the first past the post system minority governments can be rough and tumble. I suggest the reason is that both the opposition and the governing party have a carrot dangling in front of them, and that's to win the next election and win it by a majority. That incentive is not as strong where the prospect of gaining the majority is not as great, so that aspect might be different now. As well, I don't think anyone expects that the lion will lie down with the lamb and it'll all be a beautiful world. It's a matter of degree in taking it down a notch.

**The Chair:** Yes. Got it.

Do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Patricia Paradis:** I just wanted to add to your comment about the televised aspect that politics has changed a lot. I think it's more than just television.

**The Chair:** Of course.

I think it's a contributing factor in some ways.

Thank you for an interesting—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Chair, I just want to record two things that we have to learn about that.

First of all, in the first question period on TV, the questions were not 30 seconds long like we have today.

**The Chair:** That's true, and that makes a difference.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** The second point is that it was the first question period. Like the first, we are the very best all the time.

**The Chair:** Yes, who knows what the second was like.

It was inspiring all the same. I urge you to have a look at it on YouTube.

Thank you so much for your testimony and the discussion that you stimulated today.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Chair, I would like to say something.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think we're going to enter into some future business.

You're free, of course, to leave the table.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Professor Wood and Ms. Paradis, give me a few moments and then I will take the time to say hello.

Mr. Chair, before we go to the break, I would like you to request unanimous consent—since you are the one who does that—for us to distribute and discuss a motion.

**The Chair:** As you know, according to the rules we have adopted, we may not discuss substantive matters while travelling, except with the unanimous consent of committee members.

Is there unanimous consent to discuss an NDP motion?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Chair, we have witnesses and people waiting, so I would say, no.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Then that is clear and to the point.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** We will take a short break and come back for the second group.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I do apologize, but this is about the third time we've almost come to the end.

We should regard this as being a notice of motion, in that case. Is that right? It's been distributed.

**The Chair:** I don't even know if we can give notice of motion if there's no unanimous consent to entertain the motion.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Our clerk does not have to give you advice and resolve this now. Maybe when we come back we could find out what the rule is.

**The Chair:** Sure.

We'll have a break of five minutes, and then we'll come back for our second panel.

Thank you.

• (1515)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1530)

**The Chair:** The meeting has been called to order.

We have with us three panellists for the second segment.

We have, appearing as individuals, Mr. Doug Bailie, Sean Graham, and Joseph Green.

Each witness will have five minutes to present, and then we'll proceed with the round of questioning, which affords each member five minutes to engage with the witnesses.

Without any further ado, Mr. Bailie, we'll ask you to lead off.

**Mr. Doug Bailie (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to speak here today, and I'd also like to thank all the committee members for deciding to travel around the country to give as many people as possible an opportunity to have their say on this very important issue of reform of the federal electoral system.

The written brief I've presented focuses on three main points: the current voting system provides only weak accountability at either the local or national level, it exaggerates regional divisions, and a system of proportional representation would best meet the principles for electoral reform as stated in the committee's mandate.

I'm very pleased the committee has come here to listen to Albertans speak on this issue. I was born and raised in Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s. I remember seeing a picture of Canada's federal electoral map with Alberta a solid blue, but no matter how blue Alberta was, the federal government in that era was always red. It was a picture that masked the diversity of political opinion here in Alberta as well as in other provinces. It was a picture that fed a deep sense of alienation from federal politics and the federal government that was certainly ever-present when I was growing up here. It was a picture that was, to a significant extent, created by our electoral system.

I strongly believe that the House of Commons is intended to be an inclusive body that broadly represents the national community as a whole. What we have is a body that represents the plurality of opinion groups in 338 local ridings. It excludes other opinions at the local level, which results in an inaccurate reflection of the aggregate strength of those groups at the national level. Accountability at the local level is important. That's why we need proportional representation instead of the situation we have now, where in some ridings, from one election to the next, competing opinion groups take turns choosing the local MP, while in other ridings one group maintains exclusive right to representation in election after election.

Proportional representation provides a group of MPs responsible to the community as a whole. Imagine, for example, a three-member district with two MPs from party A, and one from party B. In the next election, party A knows it's not going to win all three seats, but they want to hold on to the two they have. Party B wants to take one of those seats away from party A, while other parties are also evaluating the possibility of taking a seat away from either A or B.

Instead of a plurality of voters determining one representative for the whole riding, multiple opinion groups are included in selecting several MPs. It would be a more inclusive and accountable system of representation.

My briefing has evaluated four electoral systems—first past the post, the single transferable vote, mixed member plurality, and a list PR system—against the principles of electoral reform described in the committee's mandate. Each system has its strengths and weaknesses; however, the current voting system is clearly out of line with those principles.

I therefore urge the committee to recommend a proportional representation system. Which PR system the committee chooses

depends on the weight the members place on each of those principles.

Thank you.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bailie.

We'll go to Mr. Graham now.

**Mr. Sean Graham (As an Individual):** Let me begin by saying it is an honour to be able to present my work to this committee. I'm here today as the creator of an electoral system called dual member proportional, or DMP for short. My objective this afternoon is to introduce DMP to the committee and explain why it would be the best choice to replace our single-member plurality electoral system. I plan to accomplish this by first discussing why DMP should be considered when there are already multiple alternatives to choose from. Then I will briefly explain how DMP works. To conclude, I will highlight how DMP aligns with two of the committee's principles of electoral reform.

Primarily, the committee has heard recommendations to adopt some form of single transferable vote or mixed member proportional. While both of these systems would be more effective than the status quo in terms of ensuring the votes of Canadians are actively reflected in the House of Commons, each one has features that make many Canadians uneasy with the idea of reform.

STV requires the creation of large multi-member districts. Not only would this be a significant departure from the present system, it would also be impractical to bring this type of reform to many areas in rural Canada. To implement MMP it is necessary to establish a second tier of representatives elected through the use of party lists. Both of these features have been met with skepticism by many Canadians.

In contrast to these alternatives, DMP has been designed to eliminate the need for these unpopular features. It doesn't require large multi-member districts, introduce a second tier of representatives, or use party lists. Instead it retains the simple ballot design and highly localized representation of the current system, while ensuring that all Canadians are given an effective vote. A handout has been provided to committee members that shows a sample DMP ballot.

DMP has a comprehensive design and has been subjected to thorough testing and review. This, in addition to its retention of features that are valued by Canadians, has allowed DMP to quickly gain traction. Not only does it now have supporters and collaborators from across the country, but it may become the first proportional electoral system to be approved by voters in a plebiscite and adopted by a provincial government.

On April 15, DMP was officially recommended by the P.E.I. Special Committee on Democratic Renewal for inclusion in the province's upcoming plebiscite. This decision is a testament not only to the level of rigour that went into the development of DMP, but to its ability to make Canadians more comfortable with the idea of electoral system reform.

Briefly put, DMP works by creating two-member districts where the first candidate is elected by plurality and the second by a process that ensures proportionality of the results. More specifically, proportionality is achieved by using the regional voting results to determine the number of seats each party deserves, and the individual district results to determine where each party will win its seats. In other words, DMP optimizes election results by simultaneously working to give each district its most preferred representation and each party its deserved number of seats.

While there are many options when it comes to the number and size of the regions, I'm strongly recommending that Canada be divided into four, as follows: Quebec; Ontario; Atlantic Canada, comprising Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick; and western Canada, which would encompass B. C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the three territories. With this choice of regions, all Canadians would see the full benefits of adopting DMP. In other words, every Canadian would know that their vote would have a meaningful effect on election outcomes.

However, this important principle could easily be compromised by deviating from my recommendation. In particular, I would caution the committee on defining smaller regions. For instance, making each province a distinct region would exclude the territories from reform. Additionally, it would bring a much lower degree of improvement to small provinces, most notably P.E.I., than to large provinces such as Quebec. In my view, it is imperative that the committee give every Canadian, regardless of their place of residence, a meaningful vote. There should be no exceptions.

I will now turn to the committee's principles of electoral reform. While DMP satisfies each of them, I will focus on two.

DMP would align with the principle of effectiveness and legitimacy by virtually eliminating distortions in election outcomes and strengthening the link between voter intention and election of representatives. Unlike some proportional alternatives, it would also respect votes cast for independent candidates. Ultimately, DMP would give every Canadian the confidence that their voice is helping to shape the composition of their government.

Since every MP would belong to and represent a two-member district, DMP would preserve local representation. Importantly, MPs would remain accountable to the local constituents and would rely on their support for re-election. Furthermore, the use of two-member districts would allow Canada to retain the close relationship all MPs have with their constituents. However, DMP would not merely retain the status quo; instead it offers to improve upon this relationship. Simulations of past Canadian elections demonstrate that approximately 80% of districts could be expected to be represented by two different parties in future elections. This would significantly increase the number of Canadians who are represented by a candidate that they voted for, and provide a large majority of Canadians with a choice between two MPs from different parties to approach with their concerns.

This committee has the chance to recommend that Canada start a new chapter in its democratic history. I sincerely hope it doesn't pass up this rare opportunity.

I will now be happy to answer any questions the committee has.

Thank you.

● (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Green.

**Mr. Joseph Green (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Green.

First, I'd like to thank you for inviting me. I'm a retired professional engineer. My job number one these days is to be a grandpa for three kids.

I've prepared something here. I'm not sure where this reform thing is going to go, but I wanted to leave something for my grandchildren, so they at least knew we tried. One of the things that happens when I don't sleep very well at night is that I watch Supreme Court hearings. When I get tired of watching that, I sometimes fool around with mathematics and things like that, to make sure that my left lobe is still connected to my right lobe.

One of the things I ran into, and I have some training in mathematics, of course, because I am an engineer, was a minimization exercise. There is a way to maximize representation in a numeric sense, if we can spot something. The basics of democracy is one man, one vote. The basis of our parliamentary system, both in Ottawa, and in Edmonton, and in our provinces, is that we have something that should be roughly equivalent equality between representatives. We shouldn't have one rep, for example, like Ms. May, who I guess represents about 660,000 votes in this country and has one seat.

Even more disturbing than that... It's not about PR for me or my kids, as much as we're concerned with the cleavages that have been happening because of the first past the post system. To hear people talk in Ontario and Quebec, as I have in my various previous travels heard people talk about Alberta, you'd think there wasn't anybody here except true blue Conservatives. Fortunately for us, in the last election we stopped the circus that we see playing out in the United States, which is something that Cicero and the Roman senate would have been commenting upon in terms of giving them circuses.

What I stumbled into was this. If you calculate the number of seats allocated within each province by the number of votes by that party, you get a number. It's just a calculation. You then pick the first party with the most votes and allocate the seats in the House by a declining plurality order. If you look inside your own website, you publish two numbers: how many votes and what percentage. If those ridings that have the largest plurality are filled first, then what will happen as you go down the list is that you'll get...in Alberta's case I think we should get 21—how many seats there are mathematically—and you fill the ones with the highest plurality first.

Then the second party gets its chance to fill its seats by plurality order, and guess what? All the parties that came in second, third, and so on, who won outright in first past the post, will also get filled. At the end of the day, out of the 338 seats, you'd only adjust 67 of them in order to get much closer to a situation where each MP represents roughly the same number of voters. It would not be like we have today. And I'm not selecting the Green Party for any reason, other than that's the most exaggerated circumstance.

If you do the numbers as I have, if I didn't screw up here because it was the middle of the night when I was doing this stuff, we had in the last election.... I did the math just to see what the House would be if Joe Green were configuring it. Over a million Canadians voted and are not represented in the House of Commons in any context, either as an elected MP or with a party that they voted for. If you do nothing but just allocate on a declining plurality order, that number decreases quite dramatically, to something in the order of 200,000 people.

Doing nothing but leaving the machinery alone, which as you all know is very well respected around the world.... We do not have hanging chad problems in this country. All of that machinery works well. The judicial recounts work well. We don't have to change any of the machinery. All we need is an adjustment in how the official seats are filled. My suggestion is that if we do it with a declining plurality order, we'll get very close to the objectives of PR and all those various things.

We'd end up with a minority government, but guess what? We don't elect trained seals. We elect each representative to participate in making public policy. You folks make and decide on what the public interest is.

• (1545)

That's all I wish to offer. I did the math, and I sent the spreadsheets, and I hope I didn't make any errors, because it was late at the time. That's all I wish to present. I would not have even appeared, except that it was a trick and it may not be obvious. But that's what I did.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Green.

We'll open up the round of questions with Mr. Aldag first, for five minutes, please.

**Mr. John Aldag:** I'd like to thank all three of our experts for joining us today.

One of the challenges we have is getting material circulated in a timely manner because of the translation requirement, so I would say to Mr. Graham and Mr. Green, I haven't seen the briefs you submitted. I don't know if they're in translation or not, so I'm trying to piece together what you've submitted and how the systems work. What I'd like to do is take my five minutes to maybe go into a bit of the detail of your systems or your thinking, which may help the rest of the table better understand what it is, then we can really dig into what you're proposing.

Mr. Graham, I found an online article on the dual-member, mixed proportional that I've been scanning through, but there's a lot of material here, so can you give me the *Reader's Digest* version? You talked about two-member districts. I don't know if that means doubling the number of seats, or if it means doubling the size of

the.... Take us through, in a couple of minutes, what high level your system is. The graph seems to show direct proportionality, but why and how?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** The basic idea is that you would take existing districts and merge them together. In some exceptional circumstances, mostly with northern districts in most provinces, you would have to look at maybe not merging them with neighbouring districts and maybe adding extra MPs, something of that nature.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Simply to clarify "districts", are you talking constituencies?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes, the district is the constituency, the region is the—

• (1550)

**Mr. John Aldag:** —five that you mentioned.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Four. But the region's purpose in any system, whether it's DMP or MMP, is for allocating seats, which party is on a proportional basis. In some systems, the regions and the districts are synonymous and in some they're not. In DMP and MMP, for example, they're not. They're two different entities. You would merge, likely, the districts rather than doubling the House of Commons.

In my report, for instance, I recommended increasing it by about six seats, simply to account for the provinces and territories that don't currently have an even number of seats to merge together. Then it wouldn't require a massive increase to the House of Commons.

The basic idea, in terms of electing the MPs, is you would elect the first candidate by first past the post. This is to ensure that the first-placed candidate is guaranteed to win a seat. That also puts the floor of the representation at basically the current system. Currently, the first-placed candidate is the only one who wins, and it's only the voters who voted for that candidate who are represented. In this system, since we're always electing that candidate, we're always going to be above the representation of the current system. That second MP who's elected would be an additional number of Canadians locally represented on top of the current system.

That second MP would be elected to fulfill the requirements of proportional representation at the regional level. If the Liberals need 10 seats in western Canada, for example, the second seats would account for that. The way those candidates are elected is based on merit. For the Liberal Party, for example, if they needed 10 seats, you would look at the top 10 candidates in that region for the Liberal Party and assign those seats to those candidates.

In some cases there will be conflicts. The Liberal Party might be assigned the same seat as the New Democrats, for example. In those instances you would look at the party that performed better at the local level, and the party that performed better locally would be elected. The party that didn't would have to take the next best seat on the list.

The system is designed to simultaneously elect candidates based on merit, based on their local vote, but also based on the regional decision Canadians made in terms of what they want the House of Commons to look like.

Does that give a bit more clarity to that process?

**Mr. John Aldag:** Yes, absolutely. In the calculations, such as on the sheet that you've given us, it appears that you do get an accurate representation of voter intent.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes, you're merging districts and taking half of those seats and using them to create a proportional result. It's similar to the proportional effect you would get with an MMP system, with 50% top-up seats. The difference with this system is that you can make the regions larger without making the ballot or the electoral process more complicated. With MMP, as the region size increases you're required to list more candidates on the ballot. With DMP, citizens never see how big the region is by looking at their ballot alone. Their ballot would look the same whether the region encompasses five MPs or a hundred. In this way, it makes the process simpler.

For example, in Atlantic Canada, for parties that receive more than the threshold, the level of proportionality should be pretty precise. I recommended using a district threshold of 5%. That's why in this case the Green Party is one percentage point off their deserved representation. The way I've used the threshold, it's a local veto rather than a regional veto. By doing that, if a small party performs fairly well in the region in enough local districts, it can still receive representation, whereas if you establish a regional threshold of, say, 5%, you bar those parties from winning representation until they hit that benchmark. The benchmark is slightly different from what you're used to seeing, but it's roughly the same idea.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

You've all made interesting presentations, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to focus on just one of the witnesses to get a decent exchange of information. Mr. Graham, I'd like to focus on your system. First of all, I was looking online to see what I could find out about it. There's a very extensive Wikipedia article. We are all obsessive about Wikipedia articles about ourselves. Is this a good article? Does it accurately summarize things? Can you go there as a good way of getting an intro? Or is there somewhere else online that's better, and if so, what would that be?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** There is somewhere else online that's better. I've compiled all of the work that I've done onto my website, [dmpforcanada.com](http://dmpforcanada.com). The Wikipedia article was created with some people I'm collaborating with in Ontario. I know the person who put that together and I have vetted the information there. The Wikipedia article is valid for seeking information, but if you wanted the information more directly from me, I would suggest going to the [dmpforcanada.com](http://dmpforcanada.com) website instead.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** There's an external link to it in the Wikipedia article. So I can just click on it.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** So there we are. That will give me some reading material for this evening.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** On that home page, you will notice there are two videos. For the P.E.I. campaign, they've released a video for each option. I've included their video for DMP on the home page of the website. More recently, some people I have been collaborating with in Ontario, from Ryerson University, have put together a video for DMP at the Canada level instead of the P.E.I. level. This way, you can see it more in the context we're talking about. They do a good job of going through how the system works, going into some of the details without getting bogged down in them. I would recommend checking that video out.

● (1555)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** If I may say so, on the one hand, this strikes me as being novel and clever, while, on the other hand, it's so obvious that one wonders why someone didn't think of it earlier.

There is, however, one constitutional issue that might be very significant. You talked about creating regions of multiple provinces. I suspect that would be found to be unconstitutional. The court hasn't ruled on this, but I think I know how they would rule. They talk about the architecture of the Canadian Constitution when we're dealing with our legislative branches. This is in their Senate reference case two years ago. I think it's part of the architecture of our Constitution that House of Commons seats are allocated by province. Within a province, you can do basically anything. You could have pure proportionality, MMP, STV, or your system, but I don't think you could have multi-province regions without creating something that would be found unconstitutional in the absence of an amendment. Are you aware of that concern? Has anyone presented it to you before?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes, when I did the initial project I dedicated a section of the DMP report to discussing those constitutional issues. In my reading of the discussion, for example, if you look at the Law Commission of Canada's report, they simply mention that they thought MMP, using those upper provincial regions, would likely be found unconstitutional, but they never gave a definitive answer. However, the reason MMP would likely be found unconstitutional would not apply to DMP.

MMP requires seats that would span multiple provinces in addition to the regions. With DMP we're simply talking about regions that would span multiple provinces, not the seats. From my understanding of the constitutional requirements it dictates how many seats each province must be allocated. It doesn't dictate how those seats are elected. If that's indeed true, then you could use upper provincial regions while the seats would be completely retained by each provincial district.

You could also choose to implement DMP just like MMP or STV by using provincial regions instead. That change is not complicated. The reason I think it's worth looking at the regions that go beyond provincial boundaries is you get into trouble when you try to incorporate the territories and smaller provinces in Atlantic Canada. If we implement reform without those larger regions, we effectively leave the territories with first past the post and we leave most provinces and Atlantic Canada with something pretty close to something like first past the post.

The whole point of this exercise was to bring voter equality and fairness to all Canadians. I think if we're going to do that, we have to look at exploring the idea of having these larger regions. It could be as simple as, let's say the committee decides to choose MMP as the system they're going with. Elections Canada, for example, could do its work to get ready for the next election using this system while you send in a reference case to the Supreme Court to ask that question. If they say yes, then you can go ahead with it and if they say no, then it's just a matter of changing which regions you're going to use.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Chair, I think that's really good counsel and I appreciate it.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we will hear from Mr. Boulерice.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the witnesses who are here with us this afternoon.

I will start with Mr. Green.

You have a surname that predestines you to discuss electoral reform.

Your insomnia has served a purpose since you have come up with suggestions to make to us.

First of all, I am glad that all three of you have presented systems that tend toward a better representation of citizen choices and voices, toward a form of proportionality. I must admit that, like all the members of this committee, I suppose, I had a few ideas before starting this tour. I now realize that there are more possible choices among electoral systems than I had previously realized. You have spent time studying the issue in order to propose original models to us.

Mr. Green, before asking you a question, I will make a comment.

We can observe elections and their results through a number of lenses, from a number of angles. One of those angles, I believe, was used by the former leader of the NDP, Ed Broadbent. His idea was to calculate the average number of votes necessary to elect every member from every political party.

Mr. Green, if my memory serves me, you said it took 602,000 or 603,000 votes to elect a member from the Green Party, 82,000 votes for every Bloc Québécois member and 78,000 votes for every NDP member. In other words, every time you reach 78,000 votes, a new NDP member is elected. The average number for the Conservatives was 48,000 votes per member. For the members of the majority party, under our present system, it took only 38,000 votes to elect every Liberal member. So we can say that this is a bargain because it is quick. Every 38,000-vote tranche elects a new Liberal member.

If I understand your system correctly, Mr. Green, people would still vote in the local districts as we do now, but seat distribution

would be based on the best results of the candidates from each party. I find your system frightening.

if I understand correctly, in a district where someone comes first, and has therefore won the election, but by a very slim margin because of the division of the votes cast for the party, that person might not become an MP even after winning in his or her district. I think people would find it hard to accept that.

• (1600)

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Green:** You're absolutely right.

Where shall I begin? I'll begin by simply pointing out that, out of the 338 ridings, 67 would be adjusted. By that I simply mean that the one who won first past the post would not get to be seated in Parliament. But here's the point: in most instances of these adjustments, they are going to the runner-up in terms of the number. They still are well represented in terms of the alternatives, in terms of parties.

Now I neglected to point out a criticism of what my system is. It's mechanical, and what it does is the third and the fourth-run parties that get filled, if they're that far down, get filled in a priority sequence. For example, in Alberta, the last seat allocated would have gone to the Green Party by this calculation, and there would have been perhaps under 1,000 votes in that riding. Still I argue that's a good thing. The reason I say that is one vote, one man, and all of our elected MPs are approximately equalized in terms of the numbers of voters for the party that they represent.

Now let's talk about St. Albert, because that would have been the riding with a Green member. It was under 1,000 votes. You would say, "What a terrible thing that would be. That's so undemocratic for St. Albert." My answer is that democracy is wider than just St. Albert and, if you folks want a Conservative or a Liberal, work harder on the next election.

I should have pointed out that's a limitation.

I hope I answered your question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Yes, thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Ste-Marie, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Welcome to our committee. Thank you for being here with us.

Your presentations were very interesting. Unfortunately, we have not received the documents you submitted to us as a result of translation delays. As all three of you are proposing quite technical systems, it is difficult for us to get a clear picture of what you have in mind. That is why the purpose of most of our questions thus far has been to obtain clarification.

I will start with Mr. Green.

Under your system, in that Alberta district, for example, we would have elected a Green Party member who came third, whereas the Conservatives would have come first. I think that might cause a civil war.

• (1605)

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I think I can give you an assurance that in St. Albert there certainly would not be a civil war.

We have a problem as a nation, and that is that the first past the post system, from my perspective, amplifies political cleavages. Alberta is not 100% Conservative, and Quebec is not 100% PQ. We want our representatives who are seated to be as close possible to an equal playing field as representatives of voters—

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Green—

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Green:** —who voted for that party.

I have one other thing, if I may. Please don't harness us with proportional systems that have memory from previous elections or preferential ballots where we somehow allocate the decision-making to a party we never voted for. Keep it simple. I'm an old engineer, and I'm crusty, as you can see. Please keep it simple.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Why not favour a mixed-member proportional system with a list of candidates by province?

The idea would thus be to increase the size of the current district slightly, and the Green member from Alberta, in the example you cited, would not be attached to St. Albert, which would avoid causing tensions. He would simply be a member selected from the province's list.

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Green:** My answer is simply this: we do not have class A, class B, and class C provinces in this country, and we certainly should not have class A, class B, and class C MPs. MPs are elected to express the public interest of our country, and you do it with legislation in the various areas where you function, both provincially and federally. Please keep it simple.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Green:** It won't be perfect. One of the reasons it won't be perfect is we don't get uniformity from the Constitution about how many seats and so on go to P.E.I., to the territories, and so on. We can make an improvement, and it's dramatic when you look at the standard deviations and when you look at the analysis. As I say, it was a math trick. It may not have been obvious. What this does is maximize the number of voters who are represented in the legislature.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Green.

I would like some clarification from Mr. Graham. The division into four major regions, that is Quebec, Ontario, western Canada and the Maritimes, as you suggest, would help make your system more proportional. Is that correct?

[English]

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Then going back to the subject raised by my colleague Scott Reid, under that kind of system, a Saskatchewan voter could influence the election of a member in Alberta.

[English]

**Mr. Sean Graham:** That's a bit of a misrepresentation of what would happen. The voter in Saskatchewan would participate into equal weight as someone in Alberta for the regional voting results. The regional voting results allocate the seats to each party on a proportional basis, and the allocation of those seats is strictly determined by the local voting results.

The votes in Alberta would have no role in those results, and the votes from Saskatchewan and Alberta would be on equal footing to determine the regional outcome, which they should be. One person with one vote mandates that be the case.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Consider a hypothetical situation. The Parliament of Canada must decide between the interests of Alberta and those of Saskatchewan in the case, for example, of a mega-business that has to determine in which of those two provinces it will set up operations. Could it be difficult for a voter from one province to determine which candidate from which party was elected where and how?

I do not know whether my question is clear.

[English]

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes, I understand the question.

There would be complete clarity on that. Candidates would have run and received votes only from people within their districts. They would be elected largely based on the votes within that district, so it would be completely clear who a candidate represents. It would be as clear as it is now, the only difference is that there would be two candidates per district.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** I am eager to read your brief.

I had some questions for Mr. Bailie, but I hope my colleagues will ask them for me.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

I'm pleased that you're with us today, all three of you. Thank you so much.

I have to say, Sean Graham, I'm astonished at you having invented a voting system. In 2013, as a I understand it, you were a student in mathematics at the University of Alberta, so forgive a personal question, what are you doing now?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I currently work with the Alberta government as a policy researcher.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** They figured you were brilliant and hired you. Good for them.

I'm impressed with the system, and I want to dig into your system a bit more. As the sample ballot you've given us shows, and I don't think we've dug into this, the concept is that a party could, but doesn't have to, put forward two candidates on the ballot for a voter to choose, but the voter doesn't get to rank or show a preference for one over the other. They vote for the party, but they know their candidate's name on the ballot.

Can you explain the significance of that in the way the system becomes more proportional, or what strategies the party might employ to decide what the benefit is in running one instead of two, or two instead of one?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Take a case where a party thinks it doesn't have the opportunity to win both seats, and let's say it anticipates coming in third place. In that case, they would probably deem it more reasonable to allocate all three resources to one candidate. The one candidate gives the party the possibility of winning that second seat when that decision-making process comes into play, but it also allows the party to get votes that count toward the regional result for allocating seats to each party on a proportional basis.

Running the second candidate is only necessary if the party anticipates it can win the first seat in the district. That would maybe show strength for the party when they can nominate that extra candidate, but otherwise it's not necessary.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Okay.

In the discussions we've had, it seems to me there's a theme that the simpler the ballot for the voter, the more complicated the calculation exercise for Elections Canada later. With your calculations we'd immediately know one group of top winning candidates and the calculation for the second seat, but with a two-member district, it would take longer.

How long do you anticipate it would take in real life for Elections Canada to do the calculations to ensure there are dual members? When would the second member be named?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I ran simulations for the past five federal elections, and each one takes about 60 seconds to determine the outcome.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** The tension will be unbearable.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** The thing that took awhile was writing the program to do it. The steps are mathematically simple. It's just you're doing it on a large scale with 100 ridings in each region, roughly. That's not the difficulty. The thing that you would have to wait for is for all the votes to come in, because under this system each vote would count and each vote would matter, and you would actually need to know every last vote before you could determine the final outcome.

On election night, for example, when you watch the news, what they would be able to tell you first is who wins the first seat, as they do now, and based on the regional voting results, they'd be able to tell you what the composition of the House of Commons would be. But they would have to wait until every last vote is cast to determine who those second MPs would be.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** To make sure I understand, because I have been thinking that you would need to know every last vote cast by region for four regions, do you have to wait for every last vote to be cast and counted across Canada to be able to name, for instance, the second member in Atlantic Canada?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** No. Each region would be a unique entity. Only votes in the Atlantic region would count towards the results in Atlantic Canada, and the same for all the other regions.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I do understand your system. Since it's been promoted and discussed over the last three years—I know it's not fair to ask you this because you're the inventor and promoter—have you been confronted with the weaknesses of your system? Has anyone said, "Ah, Sean, you forgot to think of this, and this is a disadvantage to an otherwise perfect system"?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** The only complaints that I've run into that I see merit in for some people is the fact that for some of these second MPs, most of them would be elected in second place, so you elect the first-place candidate and the second-place candidate from each district. In a small minority of districts in the simulation I provided in my submission, it was 13% of the candidates who would have been elected in third place or lower. Some people object to the idea of having those runner-up candidates elected. Personally, I think the objection is unwarranted. Those candidates would be top performers for their party, and whether you elect them in third place in a district or you put them on a list, in an MMP system, I don't think they have any more legitimacy on the list in MMP.

● (1615)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** That has aspects of Baden-Württemberg in terms of next-best winner, or the best-loser system.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

I'm sure my time is up, but thank you so much for your dedication to a brilliant idea. I'm not saying it's the one I prefer, I'm agnostic, but it's simply brilliant.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** I'd like to thank the three witnesses for being here today, and absolutely making my head whizz, trying to figure out, because I am very visual, so not having those briefs, it's hard for me visualize. I did download your report, Mr. Graham, and I will read it to get a better understanding. I'm looking forward to receiving the brief, as I am yours, Mr. Green.

I'd like to thank the members of the audience who have trickled in over the course of the last couple of hours and those who have stayed since the beginning.

Mr. Graham, you mentioned, and I just want to make sure I'm understanding, that the second or the regional MP would be selected based on merit. Define "merit" for me.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Sure. By merit, I mean by how many votes they received. For example, let's go back to the Liberal Party needing 10 more seats. The top performer in, let's say, western Canada for the Liberal Party at that point in time, may have 30% of the vote. So 30% of the vote for the Liberal Party would put that candidate ahead of another Liberal candidate with only 20% of the vote. When you go to the seat allocation process, the candidate with 30% of the vote would be allocated a seat before the one with 20%.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** It's purely just based on the number of votes; it's not technically based on merit. When I say "merit", I'm thinking more in performance—CV, competency, so on and so forth.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** No, it would be merit in terms of how they performed at the polls.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Okay.

Now, Mr. Green, I'm not sure I'm getting it, but I want to make sure I am. I really want to get this. You called it a declining plurality. I'm a little worried about which one of us at this table is in those 67 who got the boot, but I don't want to know.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I can find that for you.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Don't tell me. Let me live in my little happy world right here.

I just want to make sure I'm understanding, so let me just take the province of Quebec, 78 seats. In the province of Quebec, you would have 78 ridings, they have their election, first past the post. How does it work that you pick the top performers and then shift them around? I'm just trying to make sure I understand exactly how this would work.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Exactly how I did my spreadsheet in the middle of the night.

In the House of Commons report it talks about the number of votes and the calculated percentage. If you simply put that into a spreadsheet and sort the percentages in declining order, and you fill the top ones first—so let's say the calculation is the Liberals got 40% of the vote—

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** The total votes of those seats.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** The total vote is 40%, they get 40% of the seats. The first 40% of the seats are filled by that elected Liberal member with the highest percentage, then the second, then the third, then the fourth, down to the fortieth, right? It's mechanical. What I'm saying is the pluralities—and you may not notice it—actually impounds some of the things you're chasing. It's already in there. That's the trick. We want to get the maximum number of voters getting their party or their member.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Say, for instance, the Liberals had 40, the Conservative had—

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Whatever, 13—

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** —29 or whatever, the first 40% of the seats go to the top-performing—

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Right, those seats are filled first.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Got it.

● (1620)

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Then the second party gets its fill with what is left. Then the third party, and then the fourth party. By the time we get to the Greens, the Green vote in Canada is very diffused, but they still have voters and they still have preferences. It shouldn't be diluted through a preferential ballot or something else. That party should have a spokesman. The only thing that will be tough for the Greens, in this instance, is that by the time you get down to their rating, there may not be a place for the leader. It may be some other guy in St. Albert.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Good for me.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** All I'm saying is it's a math trick. That's what I wanted to bring to your attention, because we have a lot of things in our electoral system that work really well. It's the pride of our country. Many other countries emulate it. Let's not muck it up. Let's simply improve this representation so we reduce the cleavage plains in our country. In Alberta, as you now, we all have one. In Quebec I'm not sure I understand it, although I've been there on a couple of airborne jobs.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Green, you mentioned something earlier, you said if they didn't get it, then next time they'll have to work harder and just make sure their member got elected. So why wouldn't we just tell them, "Let's do that now?"

I'm just throwing that out there, devil's advocate.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Pardon me?

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Devil's advocate. What if we were simply to say to folks, "Okay, you're not happy that your candidate didn't win. That is motivation for you to go out and work harder for your candidate next time.?"

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Right, because every vote counts.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** No, no, but this is the same rationale for the current system.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Right. But in the current system, in this calculation, out of the 338 seats, all of them would be placed as the first past the post system places it. There's no need to change any of it.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Deltell.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Chair.

It's a real honour for me to see you gentlemen, and especially to listen to you. It's very interesting. As I say to everybody, it's quite fantastic to see new ways to elect people. We're open to discussion, and I think that we have a great opportunity to speak and to explain.

Mr. Green, first of all I'm very pleased to talk to you. Two personal points. First, you said that you're a grandfather. I can assure you that the best thing I've ever done in my life is to make my parents grandparents. I think just the way you act and just the way you speak, your grandchildren are very lucky to have you as their grandfather.

On the other hand, I would like to raise a question about your MP. Do you live in St. Albert—Edmonton?

**Mr. Joseph Green:** Edmonton Riverbend.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Okay. I thought it was the riding of my good friend Michael Cooper. If you have any problems with Michael, just call me.

Seriously, gentlemen, I want to raise—

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I was told that if you have nothing positive to say, don't say anything.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I like everybody. This is why I'm a politician.

Gentlemen, I would like to raise some concerns. One concern I have, whatever the system, is the link and the relationship between the citizen and the MP. I've been elected to the provincial legislature, I'm new in the House of Commons, but I know the business. I can tell you that one of the most important issues when you are a politician is to talk to your people. You develop links with your people better than expected, and when there is new electoral map and you lose some borough in your riding it's very tough. It has nothing to do with whatever we'd say in politics, in our party; we are very linked to whatever party we represent.

I would like to know in your three propositions how we could preserve the link between the citizen and his or her MP.

Mr. Green.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I made a couple of other points it would be nice to have in the reform. I wanted to bring your attention to the math or the consequences of this particular way of making a seat allocation.

It would really be nice if we elected an MP from a party who didn't cross the floor three or four days after, as has happened in Vancouver, I believe. We elect representatives mostly by party in this country, whether we wish to formally acknowledge it or not and the reason that's true is that independents don't fare very well.

If we were a nation that strongly wanted a particular way to elect our representative, then an individual independent member would matter, but it apparently doesn't. That would be my first point.

Second, I'm a citizen of the country. I elect people to represent me in my riding along with equal members or equivalent members from other parts of our country, and I expect you folks to make public policy. You're the mouthpiece for the focus or the explanation of what our public policy is supposed to be. You capture it in legislation. I expect you to make compromises. I expect you to have nice civil discussions and the odd meal and all the rest of that.

Let me talk now about the problem in the States—

•(1625)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Graham, please, there are three options at the table.

Mr. Graham, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** The main thing DMP has going for it in that line of thinking is that it keeps all MPs local. They belong to a two-member district. There is another positive side effect of DMP. It doesn't matter what the simulation is, whether it's a federal election, a provincial election, the election from last year, the election from 2011, 80% of the districts are always represented by two different parties. I think that would be beneficial to Canadians to not have to go to their Conservative or have to go to the Liberal MP, they would have the choice of going to an MP from a different party.

The other positive thing about it, the last one I'll mention here to give the other speaker time, is that it broadens party representation. In the simulations I did for the past four federal elections, in each case, roughly 50% or more of the districts would have an opposition MP. That's a novel idea in the current system. A majority of districts would be represented by the opposition. That's impossible in the current system. You can't have the opposition representing a majority of districts, because they wouldn't be the opposition, they'd be the government. But in this system you can have that as a possibility because you have those two-member districts.

The other interesting thing is the government's representation would be massive. In most cases by the time you put a coalition together, the government would be represented in roughly 80% or more of the districts. So you'd have representation from the government in almost every region in every district of Canada.

I think all of those would be a significant improvement.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Bailie.

**Mr. Doug Bailie:** I feel there are a number of options. As you know, I'm not putting forward one particular system here, but if the committee were to recommend a system of proportional representation, a number of options would require a ballot in which the voters need to make a mark beside the name of an individual candidate. I believe that maintaining that kind of a ballot would be important in that it would be key to maintaining a link between the constituency and their representative.

**The Chair:** We have to go to Mr. DeCoursey, now, please.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all three of you for being here with us today.

Mr. Graham, I'm going to spend my time with you because I think we need to give you and your system as much time as possible to enter the testimony.

I'm going to run through a series of questions I have to dig further into this system. The dual candidate aspect of your system is effectively a closed list within the riding?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Yes, you could say it's a closed list of two. Keep in mind, though, first past the post is a closed list of one under those circumstances. But don't mistake the two candidates on the ballot as comparable to an MMP list. The types of list that exist in MMP don't exist in DMP. They're different.

The other thing I'll mention is that was a design choice. I think it's best to keep the intra-party competition in open nomination processes before election day. If the committee decides they disagree with me, you could easily allow people to rank those two candidates.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Do you have any advice on the nomination process that leads to that two-candidate effective closed list?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** That would be up to the parties. Ideally, parties would have open nomination contests and come up with a system where either they would, based on a plurality vote, take the top two candidates, or they would allow a ranked ballot in their process and take the top two based on that.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you.

In your experience with the P.E.I. committee, were there any questions that came up from them that have not been addressed to you today, and if there were, what were your answers?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** No, I don't think so. I think most of what we've covered today is what we covered there. Of course, the constitutional issues didn't come up in P.E.I., because they don't apply, but in terms of the questions on the system, we've covered a lot of what was covered in those discussions.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** On the whole idea that proponents for proportional representation use in talking about a wasted vote, in your calculations, using that frame, what percentage would potentially exist under your system?

• (1630)

**Mr. Sean Graham:** The number of wasted votes is dependent on the number of regions you have. The more regions you include in your system, the more votes you will waste.

In first past the post, we have 338 districts, but those districts are also regions, and it's because we have 338 that the wasted votes are so high. Under my proposal, if you go with the four regions I've suggested, each region would have a fraction of wasted votes, probably around 3% to 4%, which is significantly smaller than the roughly 50% we usually see under the current system.

As you increase the number of regions.... With MMP, for example, or even in this system, if you decide to shrink the regions to be smaller, to be within provinces, for example, that number will slowly increase. Under the way I propose it, it's quite small.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** You and Mr. Reid had a good exchange about the legitimizing elements, the legalities surrounding your system.

As you've chosen to take on Atlantic Canada here in your submission, I'm thinking of the political legitimacy elements that exist there and some of the psychological barriers that would have to be overcome. I don't at all think they're insurmountable, but they would have to be overcome in that region of the country for the country to think of itself as a single region and not a collection of four provinces. It's an ongoing debate in our culture out east.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** One thing to note about this is that part of my reason for using the four regions is that I do think it fits with how many Canadians see Canada divided up into regions. I wanted to try to fit with that narrative as much as possible, while still making sure we count the votes of people in places like the territories and P.E.I.

The other thing to mention, though, is that in MMP the region is very visible to the public, because your ballot is informed based on that region. You would know whether your region is Alberta or western Canada. With DMP the region is not very visible to the public. The public would see their ballot with their local candidates, and they would have two MPs.

So I think the front that this would put to the public would not emphasize that. I don't think that gap would be very large. There wouldn't be much that people would have to get used to there. It's not something they would interact with on a daily basis, as they would with MMP.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Mr. Chair, please allow me just one more.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, very quickly.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** It's undergoing a particular form of plebiscite in P.E.I. right now. What do you think of that process on a national scale?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I'm quite honoured that the P.E.I. government decided to include DMP in the plebiscite in P.E.I.; however, I do disagree with using a plebiscite or a referendum to decide this issue, especially at the national level.

The first problem you get into with a referendum in Canada that you don't get into at provincial levels is what constitutes a win. If everyone votes yes except Quebec, or if everyone votes yes except Alberta, do you change the system or do you not change the system? Are we opening up the same constitutional wars we opened up in 1982?

**The Chair:** We're going to have to move on, but that's a good point.

We'll go now to Madam Jolibois.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Good evening, and thank you for the presentations. I'm intrigued.

To go back to cultural diversity, how do you see the reflection of the cultural diversity in Canada with each system? I'm interested to hear.

**Mr. Doug Bailie:** What I've tried to emphasize in my brief and in my opening comments is that there are various options in terms of moving to proportional representation that would be more inclusive of the community as a whole, be more inclusive of minority viewpoints and ensure that those viewpoints are represented in Parliament.

I've generally referred to opinion groups, but I think that could have a reflection in terms of cultural groups as well. I want to see a more inclusive political system, and I think proportional representation is key to achieving that.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I'm going to take a bit of a different tack from most of the witnesses you've had in front of this committee so far. An electoral system should not promote nor should it harm cultural diversity. An electoral system should be neutral. If the public wants cultural diversity, it should give that to them. If the public doesn't want cultural diversity, then it should also give that to them. That's what democracy is. It's supposed to express the will of the citizens.

The point in going to proportional representation is not that it will inherently increase cultural diversity, but for the Canadians who want cultural diversity it will respect their choice. Arguably, right now, Canadians do have the choice to have cultural diversity, but when they choose that, the system doesn't give them that representation. A proportional system will.

It's not the fact that the system will do this, it's that Canadians want this and the system isn't reflecting it. Does that make sense?

• (1635)

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Yes, it does.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I'll just add two points. Keep it as simple as you can and the second point would be—to answer your question—that if we have an arrangement where each constituency has the ability to select their candidate and so on and have it financed and so on, disconnected from the PMO and all of that, then it will empower it.

If we have communities or districts that strongly want a Sikh representative or something like that, they will get it. But we don't need to go and throw the baby out with the bathwater. That would be my answer, keep it simple.

One other point related to that is let's try to respect the long parliamentary traditions that we have going back to the Magna Carta. It's still part of our law and so forth. All of that really matters, for some of us at least and maybe I'm an old curmudgeon, but I like to see the guard and all of that.

Thank you.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** I have one more question for Sean. I'm intrigued by the four regions that you talk about, that you merge. I'm having a hard time trying to understand what that would look like, because it's the Northwest Territories, the mid-north, and then the southern portion.

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Can you elaborate on your question? I'm not quite sure what you'd like me to make more clear.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Again, it's on the issue around Canadians wanting representation in the House of Commons and that the way Canada is set up in terms of the further north you go, we the northerners don't have access to what privileged Ottawa may have or Edmonton.

Again, how do you foresee solving the issue around that discussion?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I think there are two things that DMP would do to help that, first, because it would include the territories, for example, in that larger western Canada region. Currently, if 30% of the public in the Northwest Territories voted Liberal, but the other 70% voted for another party, their vote would not be represented in the House of Commons.

Under this system, by including them in that region that other 70% will help determine that regional result, which will ultimately determine how the House of Commons is reflected in terms of each party's representation. It would help in that way by counting that other 70% that currently is not counted.

The other way it would help is my recommendation is to add a second seat to each territory, so each territory would have two seats instead of one.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Thank you, I really appreciated your presentation and I look forward to getting the brief.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thank you to all the presenters. As always, we value very much the contributions made by the panel.

Today is an anniversary, of sorts, that brings up a point along the lines of the answer you were beginning to give, and I would like to give you a chance to expand on the question that Mr. DeCoursey had.

In fact, 118 years ago today, there was a plebiscite in Canada on prohibition. The Laurier government had a national plebiscite on whether or not we would have prohibition in Canada. The plebiscite very narrowly passed. In the province of Quebec, it was overwhelmingly rejected, but nationally it came out just slightly in favour. Laurier then made a political decision not to go ahead with prohibition, because it was so heavily opposed in one particular province and narrowly passed in the rest.

Your point was about plebiscites or referendums being difficult and very divisive—if perhaps one province, whether it be Quebec or Alberta, is vastly at odds with other regions—but is that really a reason not to do them? Does that make imposing something without asking more legitimate than putting something to a referendum?

I congratulate you for your system being on a ballot for consideration in Prince Edward Island.

• (1640)

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Thank you.

Yes, I do think it merits not going ahead with that. I think it would be a divisive debate. I think the Brexit vote showed us how divisive these debates can be. I don't think this vote would be as divisive as that, but I do think the results—

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Should they have left the European Union without a vote?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I didn't say that. I am not saying they should have left or they shouldn't have left—

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** You see, that—

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I am saying they shouldn't have had a referendum on the issue. We elect you, in a representative democracy, to make these decisions on our behalf. The problem with this topic is that it is very technical and intricate, and there are a lot of details to comprehend. It's your job to go through those details and make the best decision based on the information you've gotten from panellists and other experts. There's that issue.

There is the issue of what would constitute a win, which I think you would need to define before the referendum, rather than after the referendum.

The other issue is that we are talking about something that goes to fundamental democratic rights. In a true democracy, you do not put rights up for a vote. When women were given the vote, for example, it would have been wrong to put that up to a vote of white men, who were the ones who could vote at the time.

If we are talking about an issue where those rights are involved, and I think here they are.... It was mentioned earlier, in the previous panel, that no voting system is perfect. I agree. However, some of them breach those fundamental democratic rights, and others, arguably, do not breach them in a way that merits repealing them. I think first past the post is on the other side of that line. I think systems like MMP and DMP—proportional systems—are on the opposite side.

If you wanted to have a referendum on an option or multiple options that would adhere to those democratic rights and principles—that would respect that when a Canadian votes for party X in their district, that vote is counted and their voice is reflected in the House of Commons—if you wanted to have a choice between multiple options that satisfied that, then I could grudgingly accept having a referendum there as truly democratic. But to have a referendum between first past the post and another system, one that respects this right, would not be democratic. I think it would be fundamentally undemocratic to do that.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** I don't think I have enough time for another question, but I might just add a quick comment on Mr. Green's early statement and some of the other comments that have come up about the number of people it takes to elect a member.

This map is simply not correct, because it assumes that the only consideration that any voter ever has is the party. I use the example of Ms. May from Saanich—Gulf Islands. We met many of her constituents in her riding a couple of days ago. She appears to be very well supported in that area. Perhaps some of the people voted for her because of the way they felt she would represent them, not because they were partisan supporters of the Green Party.

In the example, if the member for St. Albert were to be a Green Party member because of the math under your system—a Green candidate who got 1,000 votes, as you said—well, if you wanted to keep it simple, I think you'd have a hard time explaining that in St. Albert, how they ended up with a member of Parliament who got 1,000 votes.

**The Chair:** I don't think we're going to have too much time for a response.

Very briefly, please. It was more a comment, I think, than a question.

**Mr. Joseph Green:** I have only one comment. Ms. May got fewer votes in her riding than the total number of votes cast for the Green Party. What about those votes?

•(1645)

**The Chair:** That's a bigger question, I think.

We'll go to Ms. Sahota, please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Thank you to all of the witnesses. I love hearing new and unique ideas. This committee has been at this for a while now. I guess it's not that long, but it's been intense in the time

that we have been on it. It's nice to have some unique ideas proposed for Canada.

My first few questions are for you, Mr. Graham. I think you did mention it, but I missed it. You're not just adding three members to the northern area. You are, but how many members in total would you have under your system?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** I believe it was six in total. There were three for the territories and then three additional members that would be needed to give even numbers to some of the provinces that currently have odd numbers. I believe that six in total would accomplish that.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay. That's so the duality could be accomplished.

When we went up to Whitehorse, during our consultations there we heard from a lot of experts that it would be hard to sell the idea of having more representation than what they already have currently, because, according to population, they are already overrepresented. We have other ridings with triple or quadruple the number of people and with one representative.

Of course, we all see that all areas in the north are unique and need at least their one representative, but how would we sell that to the Canadian people? We would be saying that we're going to take a sample size of between 34,000 and 36,000, which is what I remember for Whitehorse or the Yukon, and they'll have one member, whereas in a riding like mine there are 113,000 people and it's one member. How would we sell giving them another member?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** “One person, one vote” was a huge consideration when I undertook this project. When you go to a system that has districts and regions, the link is separate. Under the current system, they're one and the same, but under a mixed system like DMP or MMP, they're separate.

One person, one vote is determined by the region, not by the district. Because the Northwest Territories would be in that western Canada region, the fact that they have two MPs in their district would not play a role in the question of whether it's one person, one vote. In that case, a voter in the Northwest Territories or the Yukon, whichever territory you want to choose, would have the exact same voting power as a voter in Edmonton in terms of the makeup of the House of Commons.

In that way, one person, one vote is still satisfied, but I do agree that there would be a perception that they'd be given extra voting power, even though that wouldn't be the case. There is a second alternative to address that. You could leave—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I'm sorry, but I'm not sure if I'm understanding this right. Even though the Yukon, say, would have two members, they would have only one vote between the two of them?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** No, that's not what I'm saying. They would have two MPs, but for the constituents, when they go to vote, their vote would count the same as the vote of someone in Edmonton, because they would both be encompassed in that western Canada region. It's the region that determines one person, one vote, not the district. When they cast their vote, it counts the same in that regional total as the votes of everyone else in that region.

The district vote is to determine the merit of those local candidates. Again, you have one person, one vote, because each person in that district has the same weight in determining which candidate they prefer, but the political perception—you may be right—may be that they are being given extra voting power, even though that wouldn't be true, technically speaking. One way around this is that you could leave the Yukon with one MP, while still encompassing the larger region and having the votes count to that regional total, without giving them a second MP.

I'm cautioning against that because I don't want politicians to start playing around with who gets two and who gets one. That affects the proportionality. If you decrease that too much, you end up ruining the effect of the system, but if there were exceptional circumstances where you deem that necessary, you could do that.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay.

How about that phrase you just used, which was politicians "playing around" with this or parties playing around with this? Who gets to choose who gets on the ballot? Also, who is the second dual member? Is it because of the nomination process? I'm assuming that the one who wins the nomination or comes in first would then end up being, what, the ballot candidate or the...?

**Mr. Sean Graham:** Both candidates would be on the ballot, so there would be no distinction in that way. Some of the parties, for example, might have two candidates on the ballot. So if you had an open nomination process and you placed first, you might be the first candidate on the ballot for the Liberal Party. The person who came in second would also be listed, but in the second slot. So you would know that if the Liberals were to win one seat in the district, you would be elected, and if they won both seats, the next candidate would be elected as well. This determines the order of election in the district.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you, and my thanks to our panel. That was really fascinating, and there's lots to think about there. Thank you very much for coming out.

We're going to go now to our open-mike session.

Mr. Garrett, go ahead.

**Mr. David Garrett (As an Individual):** Thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm for first past the post. I don't believe that my vote didn't count. My MP was elected but the party I wanted to be in power was not. This is the Canadian process and I accept it. I think that comparing Canada with places like New Zealand is absolutely wrong. The diversity in Canada is way different from what it is in any other country in the world. Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the prairie provinces, B.C., the Northwest Territories—all these are completely different. I'm not sure what "proportional" is. Is it proportional by party? Is it by religious belief, by culture, by gender, by sexual preference? When you go to something with that kind of diversity, where does it end? I think we need to keep the elections simple: one person, one vote.

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds left.

**Mr. David Garrett:** I believe Canada should be a voice for openness and Canadian values. My ancestors came here in 1818, which was 49 years before Canada was a country. They helped build

this country, the tapestry, and I would hate to see 150 years of Canadian tradition ripped apart a thread at a time. I think that Canadians deserve the right to vote. If it doesn't go my way, I accept that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Solomon.

**Mr. Ken Solomon (As an Individual):** Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I speak as a concerned Canadian who has travelled and toured all 10 provinces, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. I have voted in every civic, provincial, and federal election since I was eligible to vote 53 years ago. I voted because I knew my vote counted. Every Canadian citizen at the age of majority has the right to vote. They choose whether they want to vote or not. No one is excluded.

Any change will steal the power of my vote. An uncle was called to fight in the First World War for you, me, and all Canadians, to protect our right to vote. Our cousin fought in the front line of the Second World War, for you, me, and all Canadians, for our freedom to vote as we do today. With God's blessings and protection, he returned safely and was able to actively vote in many municipal, provincial, and federal elections.

A neighbour living next to me today survived D-Day. He fought for the freedom to vote as it is today. An uncle paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Battle of Ortona. He rests in the war cemetery where 1,375 Canadians like my uncle paid the ultimate sacrifice. They were killed fighting for the vote we have today. We must support, respect, and keep the way we vote today because of the ultimate sacrifice of my cousin, uncle, neighbour, and thousands of others who fought for this freedom. I have not read, heard, seen, smelled, or felt any reason to change the vote we have today.

As my cousin, uncles, and neighbours fought for the freedom of vote we have today, I am here fighting for our children, grandchildren, my fellow Canadians, to keep the vote we have today. It is not broken. There is nothing to fix. Should I have missed something, let my fellow Canadians decide with a referendum.

Thank you.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. David Parker.

**Mr. David Parker (As an Individual):** I would first like to say I'm very like Mr. Green, in that I am a retired engineer. I do have one grandchild, but I get a good night's sleep.

My notes are quite brief. I want to summarize them quickly, and before I give them, I will paraphrase Winston Churchill: The first past the post system is the best system, except for all the rest. I've written down proportional representation pros and cons, and first past the post pros and cons.

The pros for proportional representation are that it elects more female parliamentarians. That's been proven many times by OECD countries that have proportional representation. It elects more ethnically diverse governments. That's again justified by other jurisdictions. It maximizes the preferential choice of the voting public, and hence creates policies more in line with the wishes of the greatest number. If we had a proportional system in the United States, we wouldn't have had the Iran war with George Bush.

It reduces the possibility of a government being elected as a majority with less than 50% of the vote, unlike 2011 and 2015. It increases the possibility of a coalition, and hence promotes checks and balances on the major party, as with the vast majority of OECD countries. It reduces the possibility of hyper-partisanship—this is somewhat speculative—such as heckling in the House, nepotism, backroom dealing, and lack of transparency. I think it would improve that situation.

Finally, it would improve environmental performance, like Germany, Denmark, Holland, Norway, and most other European countries, which are far more advanced with their environmental policies.

The cons for proportional representation are that it's not perfect, but like many people have said already, all the other ones are not perfect as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir. That's very good.

We're way over the time limit, but those were good comments. Thank you for wrapping it up with the same quote that you started with. It shows a certain elegance of completeness.

Ms. Workman, go ahead.

**Ms. Heather Workman (As an Individual):** Thank you to all of you who are on the committee. I know you're putting a lot of energy into this, which is really important.

I also want to acknowledge something. I have had the privilege of growing up on some of the best land in this country. I grew up on Treaty 6 land, so I'm very thankful. Now I'm getting emotional. Just to get to the point, I really feel very strongly that we do need to change our electoral climate in Canada. First past the post is dated. I think it served us well, but we have changed as a country here. We've made plenty of mistakes in this area in Alberta in particular. I'm not in favour of pipelines. I'm in favour of raw bitumen being transported on our train lines, because I believe it's safer for the people. I also believe that we've made mistakes with federal influence by dismantling the Cloverdale footbridge, which I think is inappropriate. As well—and this is the issue that I really want to press on today—kids are dying in government care, and that's a really ugly thing for us to have to take a look at as a country. I believe if we had proportional representation that perhaps there would be less of this attitude of having a small group of people making decisions for others.

As a Canadian—a long-term Canadian with very long roots in Canada, by the way—I want us to have that change that actually works for all Canadians, so why don't we have a council of Canadian governments involved in the decision-making? Perhaps you can reflect on that. If you have any questions about that, please contact

me. I would like to say my phone number right now, but I think I also gave my email address, so I hope you all can email me.

Thank you.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Buxton, go ahead, please for two minutes.

**Mr. Roger Buxton (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My background is agriculture. I'm a retired rancher-farmer. I lived in one of the largest constituencies in this province, which is populated all over, called Crowfoot for most of my working life. I am definitely not in favour of a proportional representation type of system. I believe that it is so complicated to try to explain to Canadians that the government is going to get into a lot of problems if they try to do it and put it forward without a plebiscite. However, I do believe in the preferential ballot idea, which nobody seems to want to discuss anymore except in a negative fashion. I believe that a preferential ballot would give me the type of leeway that I need as the voting public to first of all blackball the party that I didn't want in power whereas now I'm strategically voting to deal with it. I believe that you have a problem as well with the Constitution, as was suggested here by one witness earlier, and I know that she suggested it probably wouldn't be a problem, but I think it could be. It's especially going to be a problem if somebody decides to try to take this whole idea down in the courts and they can put it forward and hang it out to dry.

The Prime Minister has said that he's in favour of a preferential ballot. He campaigned on it during his leadership, and I support him on that. I think that is all we really need to be looking at. We can set that up and do it very quickly in this country with the electoral system we have right now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Ms. Brown, go ahead.

**Ms. Laurene Brown (As an Individual):** I sacrificed one of the last beautiful working outside days to express the opinion of one concerned citizen, myself. I do not feel my vote produces a government that represents me. I would like to see a proportional system, in which if 25% of popular votes were, for example, for Green Party candidates, then 25% of the government representatives and committee members would be Green Party MPs. Elizabeth May is my representative on this committee, and I believe however she weighs the preponderance of information gathered here and from around the world, it will be weighed intelligently, fairly, and with integrity for all citizens of Canada.

This is my wish list: automatic voter registration upon legal age; high school course on democratic responsibilities to weigh issues in both mind and heart and on mandatory voting laws to be a requirement for graduation; and mandatory courses for elected officials on creating consensus and respectful negotiating skills, keeping uppermost in mind what are best negotiated win-wins for the largest number of Canadian citizens.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Brown.

Mr. Turton.

**Mr. Donald Turton (As an Individual):** I have two quick comments. Everybody wants perfect, but good is good enough. That's all we can get.

I'd like to say something about the difference between what we value and what our interests are.

To me, value is having a fair electoral system however you decide that is going to be—MMP, STV, whichever one you choose.

Your interest, though, because you're all politicians, is in winning, and that's not what we the people want. We want a fair system.

Thank you.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Sarcon.

**Mr. Lance Sarcon (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the committee for all of your hard work and coming all the way to Alberta. I came all the way from Calgary to deliver my opinion on how to improve our democracy.

I'm 18 years old, soon turning 19, and like many of Canada's youth I am disgusted and disillusioned with the toxic, partisan, and unrepresentative politics that first past the post has contributed to, and I fully support proportional representation.

I myself witnessed the many ills of first past the post when I volunteered for the NDP in 2015. Many people said they would vote for us if not for strategic voting concerns. That is a travesty for democracy. Canadians should vote for something, not against it.

This isn't about sore losers, as some would insinuate. In fact, even though I like the Alberta NDP government, I'll admit it's yet another false majority. Parliament ought to represent the will and the diversity of Canada. It's time we stopped talking about our elections like we do hockey, in terms of winners and losers, and rather built a truly representative democracy.

Yes, we have used first past the post for ages, and there is no perfect system, but we can do much better than the severely flawed first past the post. Do not let the naysayers dissuade you with examples that are incomparable to Canada. I implore the committee to seize this historic opportunity and not to squander it because of deadlock over some relatively minute detail.

The various proportional systems proposed each have their own merits. Pursue a compromise in your deliberations, and do not get bound by your favourite system.

Finally, I'd like to speak firmly against the alternative vote. As many academics have said before you, it would change little of our voting system. Look at Australia, it's still almost a two-party system. It is not real change like the Liberals campaigned on.

While I do believe that everyone in this committee is making a genuine effort, I must still warn the Liberals that unilaterally

imposing the alternative vote with its majority government would be completely illegitimate—no offence.

To those on the committee who oppose AV, I urge you to staunchly oppose it in your final deliberations.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

Go ahead, Ms. Macinnis.

**Ms. Ashley Macinnis (As an Individual):** Hello. My name is Ashley Macinnis, and I live in the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding. I am a young worker and a proud union activist. I was recently elected to represent members in the west for Unifor Local 2002. We represent 11,743 members in the airline industry.

I'm here today because I believe electoral reform is the single most important issue in Canadian democracy. If our election officials don't act now, we're going to lose the chance. At our convention last August, our members voted overwhelmingly to push for an electoral reform that is a proportional representation system. I'm here to speak for them.

We want a system where every vote counts, and currently every vote doesn't count. Thirty-nine per cent of the population does not equal a majority, and when every vote doesn't count, people don't vote. We lose participation.

The majority of people who don't participate are young workers, people of colour, women, and aboriginals. Those are the people I represent. Those are the people who are working at the airport today. We're asking you please to reach a consensus on a proportional representation system that's going to make our votes count, and please do not put this to referendum.

If women's suffrage had gone to referendum, I would not be able to vote, so please reach a consensus, ensure that our votes count, and do not put this to a referendum.

Thank you.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Fraser, go ahead.

**Mr. David Fraser (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I'm 24 years old. I'm here because I love Canada. I'm a proud Canadian citizen, but I'm also a deeply frustrated Canadian. The current first past the post system has many deeply rooted problems. One of them is that over the long run it's incredibly inefficient and counterproductive in the sense that one brand of policies will be implemented over the course of a government or a time, and then undone and a new set put in place by the next one. The result is that Canada as a nation lacks the ability to implement a long-term vision for our future, and I believe this is a critical error.

I urge this committee to recommend a proportional representation system to ensure that every vote gets a voice and that every vote counts. My view is that a system such as DMP or MMP would suit Canada extremely well, and we should feel free to alter the exact type and format of the system to uniquely tailor it to Canada.

A much more serious problem than the electoral system that perhaps hasn't been considered by this committee is that regardless of the electoral system we choose, the way government is formed and operates once the MPs are voted in remains the same, largely influenced by our Westminster system. We can change the way we vote MPs in, but this does not address some of the root problems with how our government functions. We must change the way government operates.

For example, out of control party discipline, routine omnibus bills, increased mandating of whipped voting and caucuses, and a wide variety of dysfunctional practices simply must change. All these and more mean that MPs unfortunately are simply partisan mouthpieces of the party to the public rather than representatives of the public to the Parliament.

Imagine a Parliament where people are sitting not in rows pitted against each other and facing each other, but rather in a circular formation where we value consensus building, where we value deliberation, where we value co-operation, and where we respect each other's views and work toward implementing a long-term vision for Canada under a proportional system.

Please vote for a proportional system and do not put it through a referendum. I believe this is the most democratic way forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Adamski.

**Mr. Peter Adamski (As an Individual):** Committee members, I'm here to talk about the first past the post system in how it suppresses the most important issue we face, and that's climate change. It's not a stretch to say that if we had proportional representation in place for election 2008, voters freed from the shackles of strategic voting and first past the post would have voted in, at a minimum, 21 MPs concerned about climate change. It's not a stretch to say that something similar would have occurred in election 2011. Imagine the outrage that would have confronted Bill C-38: the Environmental Destruction Act.

Imagine the legislation that would have been prevented and the legislation that would have been implemented if Canadians deeply concerned about climate changes had seen their votes reflected proportionally in our 2011 Parliament.

Everyone of us in this room has a child in our life. If not a son, then a daughter, a grandchild, a niece, a nephew, or the child of a friend. The children in our lives are the ones who will face the ever increasing force of the climate danger that we so far have done absolutely nothing about.

The children in our lives will someday look back and ask themselves why governments didn't act on climate change. They will come to understand that our first past the post system denied

Parliament, up to and including our present Parliament, the voice that this issue deserves.

This committee has an opportunity to change that. You can do that by recommending a proportional system of voting.

•(1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Go ahead, Ms. Longo.

**Ms. Cori Longo (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I'm Cori Longo. I'm here representing the Canadian Labour Congress. We're an organization that represents 3.3 million unionized workers across the country. We have a campaign for proportional representation, and that's what I'm here to speak on.

I just have to say that all the young speakers before me are pretty invigorating and pretty eager. I just wish that the committee would listen to them.

I love voting. I've voted ever since I had the first opportunity to vote; however, I'm not pleased with the current voting system as is.

I'm a supporter of proportional representation, and mixed member proportional representation at that, and simply because I don't believe that first past the post is fair. It's unfair and it's severely outdated. Many countries have gone beyond that and looked for better voting systems. I still can't wrap my head around how a majority government can be formed when they don't receive a majority of votes. That just doesn't make sense to me. We don't have to look very far for examples of where parties with 30% of the vote or 30-something per cent of the vote are receiving more than half of the seats.

We can look at whole regions and whole cities that are blacked out with one colour. Of course, not all of those people voted for that party. The voices of all of those people who voted for somebody else aren't represented or aren't heard. In 2015, I believe, I saw a statistic that said nine million votes were wasted and didn't count. This system doesn't work well, and it also lends itself to strategic voting. Strategic voting is the grossest thing ever. Nobody likes to do that. It takes the heart out of why you would vote. If you're not voting based on your values or convictions, you're voting based on just who could possibly win. You can't choose a candidate. If you really favour that candidate and you can't vote for them, why would you possibly vote? The system that we currently have disengages the public. Proportional representation would make sense for me. If a party receives 30% of the vote, okay, they should get 30% of the seats.

I just wanted to say that proportional representation would speak to young people. Their vote would count. It also would increase the representation for equity-seeking groups.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Watts.

**Ms. Christine Watts (As an Individual):** I would like to start by pointing out that almost two times as many countries as people in this room are currently using PR. Ninety-two countries in the world use some form of PR, and it has been increasing in recent years.

My husband has worked as a government employee with the federal government for the past 30 years, so I'm only too aware of the decreasing morale in government departments due to poor federal decisions, particularly over the last decade.

With PR it takes longer to make decisions, but the decisions that are made are wiser because they are discussed across the ideologies of different parties. The governments tend to overlap from election to election rather than flip-flop, so politicians take more responsibility and have the time for ensuring the new system will actually work. They are in it for the longer haul.

PR does require more work and skill because more time must be spent listening and negotiating, but in the long run more work upfront can save an awful lot of trouble later and it can be a lot more rewarding. Would you rather spend your time doing what the previous government did or building on earlier good decisions? Would you like more respect from the public instead of the current level of political cynicism?

Because our electoral system is learned in childhood, it is learned and practised by every citizen. It is essential that it be a system that models fairness and demonstrates that people with diverse views can work out decisions together. It is essential that it be a good example to our families, communities, businesses, and organizations of how to conduct ourselves among people with diverse opinions. The PR skills our politicians would develop will help them to negotiate well with other countries. May I add, the world needs the U.S. to have PR, too.

Let us lead the way. It takes courage to do something new. I hope your nobleness of mind will help you to decide to choose what is good and right for Canada in the world.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Vogel, please.

**Ms. Andrea Vogel (As an Individual):** Thank you for having me speak. It's nice to look everyone in the face to see the diversity—or lack thereof—in the committee.

I only have two minutes, so I'm going to make a few points very quickly. The first is to address my opinion on making a referendum. There's a resource that was presented to me, [prvote.com](http://prvote.com), that you can take a look at. It shows how the difference in wording of referendum questions can make an enormous distortion of the results. That is what terrifies me about a referendum as an appropriate way to address this issue.

My second point is that you have a mandate as a committee, and there are specific principles that you're supposed to be looking for in a system to suggest to Parliament. One of the principles is effectiveness and legitimacy, and I know you've probably read it a million times, but it does say to reduce distortion, which is why I'm very confused that the alternative vote is still on the table.

Even in your example that is in the handout, it is one possible outcome of how AV can look, but in many cases—and I'm sure that in your study of that system you can look at the ways—it can distort results worse than first past the post can. Therefore, I don't believe it should be in the running, and my fear is that, because it is preferred

by the Prime Minister, who has endorsed it in the past, it might still be on the table for political reasons.

Another point is that the other principle of accessibility and inclusiveness might be used as a reason to promote alternative vote, using it as an accessibility issue. We did hear from one other person that it was too complex to talk about a proportional system, but my argument is that the least complex system is dictatorship, so we have to look at complexity, we have to look at—

**The Chair:** That's not on our list of options.

**Ms. Andrea Vogel:** —thank you, I'm so glad of that.

AV is also quite distorted, and I think if we're going to talk about accessibility—we've used single transferable vote in Edmonton before in the past at provincial levels—it's not too complex. I think that principle needs to be very carefully observed and that we should actually look at accessibility and not use it as an excuse to include a distorted system in the options.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now it's Ms. Isssenman's turn, please.

**Ms. Sally Isssenman (As an Individual):** Thank you very much for this opportunity to address you. It's been a very exciting afternoon, I must admit.

On Saturday, September 10, I participated in a dialogue on electoral reform that was hosted at the The Sutton Place Hotel in downtown Edmonton. It was hosted by Minister Monsef, and member of Parliament Randy Boissonnault was there and other people as well.

I'm not sure if the dialogues on electoral reform have any relationship with this committee, but I was very disturbed and concerned that evening that in the written material that was handed out, in the power point presentations that were presented, as well as in the speaking, the term “alternative vote” and AV were used interchangeably to denote both a voting system and alternative vote, meaning we're going to look at changing the system from what we have now because we need an alternative voting system.

I found it very alarming that federal people, material, and power point presentations would so mix up such important terms at such an important time in our discussion on electoral reform. I wish I had brought my printed material with me here, but I'm sure you can look for it. Take a look at what's going on in those dialogues on electoral reform, and I would like to ask this committee to please address that issue because those dialogues are also going around the country, and I found that incredibly inappropriate.

•(1725)

**The Chair:** For clarification, our committee is pursuing a separate process. We're a legislative committee and we have our mandate from the House of Commons to conduct these consultations. We've also invited all MPs to conduct town halls. The comments from the town hall you attended will be funnelled to us. In parallel to that, the minister is doing her own outreach with her own budget and her own schedule. I guess Mr. Boissonnault invited her to be a guest to explain the system. Anyway, they are separate, parallel consultations.

**Ms. Sally Isсенman:** Just to clarify, this was a dialogue that was also taking place in other Canadian cities.

**The Chair:** It was her tour, the minister's tour. Sorry about that.

**Ms. Sally Isсенman:** It was not a town hall meeting. So given what Mr. Buxton was saying, that in the eyes of many people, the Liberal party favours AV, and being at this event where it was so confusing....

**The Chair:** No, that event will not feed into our committee process as far as I can see.

**Ms. Sally Isсенman:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Stout now.

**Mr. Martin Stout (As an Individual):** Thank you for hearing me.

Good afternoon. My name is Martin Stout. I am British by birth and upbringing, which you've all guessed by now anyway, but I'm Canadian by choice. I've been a resident of Beaumont for 25 years, and I've been a Canadian citizen for 21. I've voted in elections in both countries as often as I could.

Britain and Canada both elect democratic governments by what's known as the Westminster parliamentary system. In such a system, we, the voting public, do not elect a president, a commander-in-chief, a prime minister, or even a government, as some other countries do. We elect members of Parliament, 338 of them, from ridings across the country, and it's those elected MPs who decide who shall be in the government and who shall be the prime minister.

The power and authority to do this, where does it come from? Where does the government get the power to make legislation that binds us all and to levy taxes we must all pay? That authority derives exclusively from the mandate that we grant them by voting for them. It's only by voting that we can give our consent to be governed in this way, regardless of the actual outcome of the vote. This consent, expressed through voting, is what gives Parliament its power and authority to govern us. It follows logically and inevitably that neither government nor a prime minister has the right, the power, or the authority to change the counting method, or the value of each of our votes, without our expressed consent. The best way to do that is by offering options to change the vote, including an option of no change, through a referendum or a plebiscite in all 338 ridings for every voter to participate in.

In every case I've been able to find, in a Westminster style of government—and that's Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Great Britain, provincial governments here in Canada, Ontario, B.C., Prince Edward Island, all of them—when they've sought to change

the voting system, they have gone through a referendum or a plebiscite. I believe very strongly that to change the voting system without such a referendum, without seeking the consent of the voters, would be illegitimate.

•(1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Hoffman.

**Ms. Robyn Hoffman (As an Individual):** Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Mr. Graham did a better job than I ever could in expressing my opinion on a referendum, so I won't rehash his points. I was looking for a little more information. Some of the members of this committee have expressed their preference for a referendum, and I was hoping you could give me some guidance on what your referendum question might look like. Are you looking for a simple yes or no on going away from the first past the post system, or are you looking for Canadians to give you their ultimate preference in a ballot? Did I not cast my last strategic vote?

**The Chair:** Is that a rhetorical question?

**Ms. Robyn Hoffman:** You can answer it.

**The Chair:** We don't want to get into a Q and A with the committee members, it's not our format. My understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, was that you stated, Mr. Reid, that you're categorically in favour of a referendum and that no change option should be considered.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** You have to have status quo as one of the options.

**The Chair:** Yes, status quo is one of the options.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** To finish off, though, very briefly, there have been two ways that this has been done that strike me as being legitimate. One way was in British Columbia where the question was, "Do you support the B.C. STV model?" It's a very specific, well designed, fully fleshed-out alternative, as approved by the British Columbia citizens' assembly. That model versus the status quo got 57% in favour of change, although they had a 60% margin, which I don't agree with.

The other way of doing it is as they did in New Zealand where you would rank all the different preferences. You can structure a preferential referendum in several different ways, albeit using the chairman's discretion. If you look at how P.E.I. has done it, it's one option. New Zealand has done it a different way, and on a different issue, whether to change their flag. New Zealand tried a different kind of preferential.

I don't know which is the best. I just know they're all options that appear to be regarded as legitimate by the people who have been involved with the process.

**The Chair:** The status quo remains an option.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** The status quo is in all of those, yes.

**The Chair:** Yes, okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Pound.

**Mr. Joe Pound (As an Individual):** Thanks for being here. It was interesting this afternoon.

I'd like to give kudos to all the young people who came up and spoke, because they're eloquent.

I went to a town hall at Edmonton Centre here a little while ago, and a retired MP came up to the mike and said that first past the post is the only thing to obtain power and get things done. Within the meeting here today, a few people mentioned power quite a bit.

My impression of elected officials is they're there to serve, not to dictate. Electoral representatives and their parties...my impression is that we use what we have because it works for us and does not serve the population. How many people who support first past the post have offered amendments and been aware of the consequences of all the omnibus bills that were passed in the last 10 years?

Mr. Graham's DMP proposal should be thoroughly vetted and included in determining electoral performance and where this committee intends to go.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Lennon.

**Ms. Loreen Lennon (As an Individual):** Hello. Thank you for having me. I came a little late, so I haven't heard all the discussion, because I wasn't really aware that this was going on. It came out of nowhere. There wasn't a lot of information ahead of time.

I'm here because I've been around for a while. I've been through this process many times. I have no statistics and I'm not really well organized, I didn't get a big pitch here for you today. As a regular citizen, I'm not probably in favour of changing the system, but I'm open to listening to that dialogue. I would be very offended if that choice for me was taken away by a government just deciding that it was okay.

I also am surprised here today by what I have heard about how voting systems all of a sudden are changing the world, or that somehow a voting system would cure all of what are seen to be the ills today. I think that's a little naive. I think it's trying too hard to push something that's not on the table at the moment. This is a voting system we're looking at. We should think hard about that, and all of us should think hard about how we vote, but we should all have the opportunity to make a decision ourselves on that, rather than be told.

Thank you.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Finally, we have Mr. Johnston.

**Mr. Peter Johnston (As an Individual):** I didn't bring a lot of notes here and I wasn't here for the whole discussion. I'm not going to get into much of the technicalities because I think there are people who are smarter and more knowledgeable who may have already done this, but I want to make a comment about our present system and how it runs.

When I was 14, I went on a school trip to see how Parliament worked in Britain, and after about 20 minutes, I turned to the teacher and said, "You wouldn't allow us to behave like that in class, would you?" She said, "Absolutely not." I don't know how many people

here have sat through the whole of question period. I've managed about 20 minutes before I start pulling my hair out, as you can see, and I can tell you with this present system we have now, when we've basically got two parties, watching question time is like watching two hockey teams try to score points on each other.

They're not discussing policy, they're not discussing how to run the country, they're trying to score points on each other, and this situation is because of the first past the post system. We need to have a hung parliament. Hey, they'd have to discuss things. This would be a complete breakthrough, and there's no sign of it happening now with the present system. Believe me, as a Brit, an ex-Brit...I don't know if I can renounce my citizenship with the conduct of the British Parliament, but I think I should. With the present system, it's all confrontation and everything gets lost. It's very frustrating. No wonder hardly anybody turns out to vote. No wonder the young people say, "Oh my God, look at that." I'm not a young person and I say the same thing.

We have to fix the system. It's outrageous. It doesn't work. And if you continue to use a system that doesn't work, because of tradition, then you just aren't getting it. We need to change the system. There are many different systems in use around the world, but very few countries use the first past the post system, and it is not democratic.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Deltell, but be brief.

[English]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** For the record, I would tell you that question period lasts 25 minutes a day, period.

I would simply like to remind you that 80% of the bills are adopted unanimously in the House of Commons. Have you seen how we work today? It's exactly the same thing in the committees in Ottawa. I invite you to listen more to question period. I'm sure you would appreciate your MP, as you appreciate what we have done today.

**The Chair:** Okay, that wraps up our first public input session of the day. We'll have another one around 7:30 p.m..

We'll adjourn now until 6:15 p.m., if you don't mind.

Thank you. Thank you to the participants.

• (1735)

(Pause)

• (1825)

**The Chair:** We'll now open the meeting. This is the last segment of our day here in Edmonton.

I would just remind everyone that even though we're not on Parliament Hill, it's as if we are on Parliament Hill. We have to function according to the rules of the committees that sit on Parliament Hill. Essentially, for our purposes here tonight, it means that after the gavel comes down to open the meeting, there cannot be photos or videos taken until the gavel comes down to close the meeting.

We have with us this evening two more panellists. We have David Blain and Professor David Nash, professor emeritus at the University of Alberta, presenting for 10 minutes each. Following their presentations, we will have a round of questioning. Each member gets to engage with the witnesses for five minutes. That includes answers to the questions and so on.

We'll get started right away with Mr. David Blain, please.

**Mr. David Blain (As an Individual):** Hello, my name is David. I'm going to talk to you about STV, voter's choice electoral reform. I am honoured to be here to speak to you on the traditional lands of Treaty 7.

I view electoral reform through the eyes of a voter not associated with any political party. My goals are to choose an electoral system that is reasonably proportional, to ensure all voter groups are represented by an MP in every district and to empower voters. The action I think we need to take is to implement STV in five-member and seven-member districts, and to implement quotas to increase diversity.

My recommendation, as I said, is single member transferable, in five- to seven-member districts, prioritizing seven-member districts. I would increase district sizes and maintain 338 MPs. Canada would have 56 electoral districts, with an average of six MPs per district.

Electing an MP is about voters choosing a representative. The elected body of MPs should represent each particular school of thought and the diversity of people in each district. The courts have indicated that the charter gives us the right to effective representation. STV is an opportunity for both effective representation and equal legislative powers. Both the government and the opposition would have an MP in most electoral districts. Most voters would see an MP corresponding to their choice of political party within their district. Voter choice among candidates within each party empowers voters.

On district sizes, the question that comes up is whether five-member and seven-member districts are too large in area for voters. I emphasize voters. Let's compare Canada to Australia. Both countries have large areas with low population. The size of Ontario and Quebec are about the same as western Australia, which is one electoral district. Ontario and Quebec, under this scheme, would have 31 districts. The average Senate district size in Australia is 50% larger than Alberta.

In terms of diversity, STV can encourage diversity. Australia elected 38% women to the Senate using STV, compared with 28% women in the House of Representatives using alternative vote. Two aboriginal senators were elected, which is equal to the percentage of aboriginal people in the population. I would include quotas for women and indigenous peoples to accelerate gender and diversity balance.

I have consulted some online research, and the research by Carey and Hix indicates that small multi-member districts are best, and they quote four to eight members. Five-member districts reduce disproportionality by 75%. Government performance in small member districts is better than or equal to single-member districts or large member districts.

Let's give everyone an aligned district MP. Research has indicated that only 4% of voters prefer a local MP if they are not aligned. About 40% of voters prefer an MP if they are aligned.

Here are my conclusions. Why not have effective representation for all voters? Why not give equal legislative power to all voters? Why not have an aligned MP in every district? Why not have a government and opposition MP in most districts? Why not have a choice of candidates within each political party? Why not increase diversity? Why not empower voters? Why not STV?

Thank you.

● (1830)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Blain.

We'll go to Professor Nash, please, for 10 minutes, if you wish.

**Mr. David Nash (Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta, As an Individual):** I must admit that having been told that I was going to get five minutes, probably I'm going to get through my script, otherwise I wouldn't have.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry about that. Take whatever you need.

**Mr. David Nash:** I'm going to take a very direct approach very much the same as David Blain has. I'm going to pitch for one system and talk about some of the problems associated with it.

Proportional representation is without any question the key to finding a fair electoral system to replace our currently unfair and illogical one. I'm going to give you a few notes on open-list mixed member proportional representation. For conciseness, I'll call it MMP. I know that obviously does not include all MMP systems.

I support MMP because it's a simple balloting system. It does not increase the number of MPs. It connects MPs geographically with voters, and I'll explain how later. It ensures that every MP faces the electorate, that's why it's an open system, and it yields no extra power to political parties. Now, all of those things, of course, could be changed, but it has that possibility. I recommend a MMP system designed as it could be so that every voter would have the option of placing a single mark on the ballot exactly as we do now to produce a complete ballot.

The next best system, the one we just heard about, would have asked voters to identify their rank preferences from a list of perhaps 20 or more candidates. One of the problems with that system is that there's a lot of arm-twisting involved in getting people to use the lists, the orders of selection that particular parties want, and I think we should avoid that.

I can't predict the exact form of MMP that it would take, except that elections would be independent in each province to avoid constitutional constraints. Under MMP, larger provinces would be further divided into what I call proportionality zones, with voting populations of, say, 10 times the current average riding in the country now. Each zone would contain ridings in my model—it would be six, but it doesn't matter—maybe a third larger than the current average. Each of those ridings within each proportionality zone would elect a single MP, the same way as we do now. The remaining MP positions that were freed up by enlarging the ridings would be elected based on the popularity of parties within the zone. These I call “MPs at large”, avoiding the term “top-up MPs”, which makes them sound like something that's floating around in the air and not doing anything.

Voters could choose to support a different candidate or party in electing the MPs at large if they wished. All the candidates in the “members at large” election would include all party candidates in the zone, and perhaps some independents. If you want me to talk about that later, I will. The political attachments of the entire group of MPs and “MPs at large” would reflect the pattern of support expressed by the voters in the zone. The “MPs at large” would be jointly responsible with the ordinary MPs for what's now called riding work. That's throughout the zone. Remember there would be exactly the same number of MPs to deal with the number of electors as there are now. So the work would have to be done, and it would have to be done by all of them.

●(1835)

That basically is how I would see the election going, but my original brief was a response to a suggestion by Fair Vote Canada, of which I'm a very proud member, a suggestion that I don't feel comfortable with.

First, the system divides the rural and urban districts from each other. It uses two quite different electoral systems, STV in urban regions and MMP in rural regions, which is hardly a simplifying idea, especially since, as I see it, voting in an MMP election is a lot easier than voting in an STV election. To be fair, MMP is conceptually more complex than STV, but the voter can use it quite easily.

My second objection to it that is the division might be hard to dislodge. If urbanization continues in the country, division of the electoral process in two might significantly impede adjusting to the demographic change.

I suggest that both urban and rural regions use MMP, and the electoral zones should normally include both urban and rural ridings. Given the requirement for electoral zones with equal-sized voting populations, this would commonly be a practical necessity.

To go on to a few other problems, in a country this large, there must be occasional special circumstances. For example, some

current ridings are large and under-populated, and increasing their size could be impractical. The system must be flexible enough to absorb this reality. I suggest that these ridings be integrated unchanged—or with little change—into MMP zones and counted as standard ridings. The improperly high MP-to-voter ratio would be at least partly balanced by the lesser impact of the smaller ridings on the “MPs at large” elections. It would be ideal, however, to only have one such under-populated riding in each zone.

As for other problems, clearly, the three territories have to be treated somewhat differently, and Prince Edward Island is also a dilemma, but it's constitutionally protected against changing its overrepresentation. However, it could use MMP with its four-member team of MPs, which is constitutionally guaranteed. I suggest two ridings and two MPs at large.

Finally, we must consider aboriginal peoples. I'm quite horrified that there seems to have been very little discussion of this question.

It is the responsibility of the federal government, and of the Parliament, I suppose, to interface with aboriginal peoples to ensure that they are represented in a manner that's acceptable to them. That, I think, is the crux of the matter. They have to be represented in the way that they feel is right, but also, of course, in a manner that's fair to the general population.

●(1840)

**The Chair:** Wrap up quickly, please.

**Mr. David Nash:** My final point is very simple. I think there is a moral dimension to running a referendum, and because I think you can't determine the rights of minorities, that is, their right to vote and to be represented by a referendum, then having that is very questionable. That said, failure to reach an agreement to introduce a fair voting system would be a much greater evil than using a referendum to achieve that would.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Professor Nash.

We'll start the round of questioning with Mr. Aldag, for five minutes, please.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Great. I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for joining us this evening and thank the members of the audience. I recognize some faces from earlier today and some new ones, so thank you for coming out to join this important discussion, and hopefully, you'll be able to participate in our open mike session after this panel ends.

I appreciate the comments that both of our witnesses have provided.

You've touched a bit on it, but I'd like to go into a bit more exploration of the size of the districts. The riding I represent right now in Vancouver is Lower Mainland. The boundary is 47 kilometres. I ran it last Father's Day as an event, so it's doable.

I've also had the opportunity to live for several years in the Northwest Territories right on the northern boundary of Alberta. I've driven both from Edmonton through Fort McMurray and onto the ice road through Fort Chip up to Fort Smith and got around on the highway up through Hay River. I have a real appreciation for the geographical challenges that our country faces. Both of you have talked about having to resize the zones.

Professor Nash, you mentioned that the territories would require some sort of special treatments. I'd like to hear from you on that, but I also wonder about your thoughts on the Prairies, the large northern ridings we have in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Northern Ontario and northern Quebec have the same issues, as does Labrador. Could you talk about your vision for how we overcome the challenges of the large geography and the small populations and how you see this playing out?

• (1845)

**Mr. David Nash:** I tried to mention that in my address.

**Mr. John Aldag:** And you did somewhat.

**Mr. David Nash:** I believe we have simply to accept that there are some regions that deserve independent representation regardless of whether that means breaking some of the rules that we're trying to bring in for the vast majority of the country.

**Mr. John Aldag:** So should that individual representation remain under the first past the post system?

**Mr. David Nash:** With respect to the territories, if it's possible, I think they should be made into one zone in which they deal with it in some unique way but with an attempt to make proportionality there among the three territories.

With respect to the northern constituencies in provinces, I think they should be treated as perfectly good ridings that would be incorporated into proportionality zones.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay.

**Mr. David Nash:** My model says 10 MPs from a zone, six of them from ridings, four of them at large. I think one of six ordinary ridings would elect an MP, and because its population was small, it would have a lesser effect on the elections at large.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay.

Mr. Blain, what are your thoughts on these things?

**Mr. David Blain:** I think we need to respect the boundaries of our provinces and territories and I think we have to leave them as they are. I would leave the MPs as they are, unfortunate as the situation is, with one MP in each district. The question of the larger districts in provinces is a fact of life of Canada, just like it's a fact of life of Australia. We have huge areas. I agree with you: they're very big. But who are they big for? The voters still go to the same polling station. They can still email their local MP. There are all sorts of communications now that we didn't have. When I started school, I went there in a horse and buggy in rural Saskatchewan. Seeing an airplane was a novelty. Now we have vastly improved transportation and communication.

Australia seems to do just fine. Western Australia, one district, is 2.5 million square kilometres. I recognize that it's huge, but over the past four years I spent maybe six months in Australia, and I never,

ever heard anybody complain about the size of the district. It's simply a non-issue.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you. It looks like I'm out of time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our panellists, the members of the audience, and those who will speak at the open mike to follow.

I'll maybe allow Mr. Blain to continue with regard to Mr. Aldag's line of questioning. I'm quite interested in this as well.

In light of testimony we heard earlier this week when we travelled to Whitehorse...and indeed from some of the observations of our committee member Nathan Cullen, who was with us earlier in the week, who represents a large riding in British Columbia. As members of Parliament, we've had a lot of discussion from the members here. Under the current system, when the election is over we are—all of us, I hope—committed to representing all of our constituents, regardless of who they voted for. We take a lot of steps to try to do that through meeting with constituents. In a city, where you can have an office that's accessible to most people, that's one thing, but for these large ridings, a member of Parliament has to do a lot travel in between all the rest of their parliamentary duties in Ottawa.

I'm glad Mr. Nash mentioned urbanization. The process of urbanization makes ridings bigger and bigger and bigger over time, because the size of a riding doesn't typically change. When there's redistribution for population growth, it adds cities to where more people live, and thus makes the other areas larger and larger. Any type of system of proportionality I think inherently exacerbates that issue in the north.

Specifically in the Yukon, there seemed to be no interest, from any of the panellists or audience members, in lumping together territories. Even those who preferred proportional representation perhaps for the rest of Canada did not want to see it in their own area.

I'll let perhaps each of you address that.

• (1850)

**Mr. David Nash:** If that's what they want, that's fine. I think this is an exceptional situation. I believe it's possible to link them together electorally, because they're not provinces, but if they don't want to be linked together and they would prefer to stay the way they are, that's fine.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Those who spoke to us, anyway, clearly didn't.

**Mr. David Nash:** That's fine. They have a sort of buddy thing; they're happy there.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Go ahead, Mr. Blain, if you have anything else to add on that.

**Mr. David Blain:** I think the northern territories are very large. Nunavut is probably one of the biggest electoral districts in the world. We made them individual territories, and I think we need to respect that. I have no issue with keeping them as they are.

I recognize that in northern provinces their ridings would be very large in terms of districts for a single transferable vote. But how many times, in my life, have I gone to see my MP? Once: that was when I went to see you.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thank you for doing so.

I was pleased to meet you, and I'm glad you took the opportunity.

**Mr. David Blain:** My point is, how often do voters do this when they're not aligned with their MP? It's not a big issue.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** I would hope that wouldn't be part of their calculation. We don't ask people who they voted for. We don't even speculate. We deal with people as they come to us, because it's our duty to represent all the constituents in our riding. That's what we are elected to do.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Boulerice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses.

Thank you for being here. It is very interesting to hear you both, even though there are slight differences between the proposals you are making. Both of you are suggesting a change in voting systems in order to achieve a higher degree of proportionality to ensure that the voices of all citizens find their way to and place in our Parliament.

Professor Nash, I would like to make sure I correctly understood you. You said at the end that you were not really in favour of the idea of a referendum on a change in voting systems because the majority decision might trample minorities across the country. I am not sure I correctly understood what you meant.

• (1855)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Nash:** It's quite simple. When you hold a referendum with an all-or-none result, that result is going to reflect the prejudices of the majority. Those who are in fairly small minorities, but not inconspicuous ones—the Green Party is one of them—are going to be screwed, essentially, by the process. They're not going to get a fair shake. I think it's a moral decision that things that involve minority rights are not subjected to any kind of referendum. However, as I said, if holding a referendum eases the way to a proportional representation system, it's obviously ridiculous to oppose it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Professor Nash.

You are presenting a certain type of mixed-member proportional voting model. In that model, does a voter have two votes, one for the local candidate and the other for the party, or are we basing ourselves on the vote for the local candidate and subsequently transferring it to achieve an offsetting proportionality.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Nash:** No, I don't think that provides an open system.

There would be an option of voting for one candidate, which you would use as your candidate for the local MP, and your candidate by their party, for the calculation of proportionality.

On the other hand, there may be people who want to take the option of changing parties, changing candidates, so you would have a second part to the ballot, which I envisage being printed in slightly smaller type than the main ballot, that people could use to select a different candidate or a different party.

There is a question of their making a mess and choosing two things on that second one. Under those circumstances, if they were compatible, in other words if the person they voted for was with the party they'd chosen, that would be fine. Otherwise, that would just be a spoiled part of that ballot, and it would revert to their original one.

That's what I was thinking.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** All right, thank you.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 35 seconds left.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Blain, many people have told us that districts with multiple members, three or more, would help achieve a certain proportionality threshold. However, you are talking more about five to seven members.

Why would the number not be three or four?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Blain:** There are two reasons. One, a three-member riding requires 25% of the vote to get elected. A seven-member riding requires 12.5%. There's a marked difference in those two. If you plotted this out, it would be a long curve that goes out like this, so I don't think three-member ridings is the right number in that sense.

The other reason is that the study by Carey and Hix indicates that one- to three-member ridings don't do as well in terms of economic performance, in terms of government spending and stuff like that. Their sweet spot, they called it the "proportional sweet spot", was four to eight members. That's the other reason I chose five to seven members.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Ste-Marie, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, gentlemen.

I think the witness group you two form is particularly interesting. One of you advocates regional representation and the other proportional representation. Without being Machiavellian about it, I would be tempted to pit you against each another.

Mr. Blain, what are the main reasons why you prefer the system you advocate, the single transferable system, to the mixed-member proportional system?

Then I will put the question to Mr. Nash so he can defend his position. These are the two systems we most often hear about. At the time, the Canadian Law Commission opted for mixed-member proportional representation. The British Columbia citizens committee opted for the single transferable system.

Mr. Blain, please go ahead.

• (1900)

[English]

**Mr. David Blain:** I think the number one thing, front and centre, is something I call equal legislative power. What that means is under STV in five- to seven-member districts, if they had 100,000 votes to elect an MP, every MP would be elected with 80,000 to 90,000 votes. Every MP has the same authority given to them by the voters, and that is huge to me because every voter then gets equal legislative power because every MP who ends up in Ottawa has one vote, and every voter who voted for that group then gets one vote. I think it's a Charter of Rights and Freedoms issue.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Nash, it is your turn.

[English]

**Mr. David Nash:** I don't think that the two systems differ in this regard. They empower the people who are elected on the basis of their having numerical support within the country to allow them to have the force that they should have in Parliament, so I don't really have anything more to add to it.

**Mr. David Blain:** I have just one more comment. If under mixed member proportional somewhere between 60% and 70% of the MPs are elected with first past the post, they're probably elected with 30% or 40% of the vote, 30,000 to 40,000 votes. Why not elect MPs, all MPs, with 80,000 votes instead of some with 30,000 and some with more? It's really back to the two items in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: we're all equal under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and second we all have a right to vote. The courts, when they look at that, say that Canada's on a gradual step towards effective representation. We haven't got there, and we need to get there.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** British Columbia established a citizens assembly that sat for nearly a year.

Do you think that would be a good way to proceed with the federal reform?

You may answer in turn.

[English]

**Mr. David Blain:** I think we should proceed and implement it now, and I think after two election cycles we should have another go-around to see if we can't make it better. If people wanted to have a citizens' assembly then, I think that would be wonderful, but I think we're long past due the point that we need effective representation. I would proceed now, without a referendum, and after I would follow up with some kind of almost sunset-type of legislation to re-examine the weaknesses. Then probably the citizens would be the best to re-examine that.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Nash, please go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. David Nash:** I have no comments to make.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both witnesses. Here in Edmonton we've had extraordinarily fine testimony. I don't know if you were here earlier for Sean Graham's presentation on dual-member proportional. I just wonder if I could ask each of you—and forgive me if you've already touched on this—what you thought of that system. We have two advocates before us who want proportional fair voting, one who favours mixed member proportional and one who favours STV. I think you're very familiar with the merits, the pluses and minuses of other systems.

Have you looked at dual-member proportional before, and what did you think of it?

I'll ask Professor Nash first.

**Mr. David Nash:** I looked at it before. I must admit I was discouraged by his insistence that we should go through a very complicated process of amalgamating provinces, but it is possible to do it without that. It seems to me a perfectly sensible system. It is essentially an extension of an MMP.

• (1905)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Blain, do you have any thoughts on the dual-member proportional system?

**Mr. David Blain:** I thought the idea of combining different regions was unique. I probably wouldn't have done that myself. I don't know the answer to whether or not it gives us equal legislative power to the voters. That's the key thing that I'm driving at because we are a representative democracy and we need our MPs to represent us equally. That's the bottom line for me.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** As you've described equal legislative powers of voters, that for me is one of the things that we as a committee, regardless of what we recommend, will have to strive to explain to Canadians and the rest of Parliament who haven't been on this journey with us. The goal of electoral reform is not to make things better or fairer for political parties, but to make things better and fairer for voters. I think that's the essence of what you're both trying to present here tonight.

I want to switch to one of the other recommendations you made in your testimony, Mr. Blain, that we didn't touch on. Obviously you had to compress a lot of material. You have also recommended reducing the voting age to 16. I want to ask you why, and then ask Professor Nash if he agrees that it's a wise idea.

**Mr. David Blain:** Yes, for two reasons. One, if you catch a voter early while they're still studying civics, I think they become a voter for life. That's one piece of the equation. The other piece of the equation involves long-term decisions that MPs make. Frankly, they're going to live with the decisions a lot longer than I am.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Professor Nash.

**Mr. David Nash:** I have not thought carefully about it. My inclination is to say there is no harm to doing so, but there is no necessity.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Professor Nash, I was struck by your using the term "moral" in your testimony, a moral dimension to holding a referendum. We've talked about constitutional issues, legal necessities, lack of legal necessities, and political necessity, but, in going through my memory bank, I think you're the first witness to suggest that it's a moral question.

I wonder if you want to expand on that at all or if you feel you've said what needs to be said.

**Mr. David Nash:** Yes, I think I said what I meant to say. I think quite simply any referendum system that involves minority rights is suspect.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** If there were a referendum.... Again this was something that was suggested earlier by Sean Graham and not from any previous witnesses. He said it's objectionable to put up to a vote a system that by definition is unfair, but if you were to put to a referendum a series of choices among fair voting systems, that would be less objectionable.

Do you think that would be less objectionable? Do you agree that's one way that one could parse the situation?

**Mr. David Nash:** If they are all systems that give people fair voting, then I would be perfectly happy to see a buffet where the country could pick which one they wanted.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Blain.

**Mr. David Blain:** I wouldn't do it simply because I've been at a couple of group sessions where they are talking about proportional representation and changing it, and the level of understanding in the general population is extremely low. I think if you try to get people to pick between three different systems, they would just pick the one they heard of last. I don't think you would get an intelligent vote.

We have elected representatives. We're a representative democracy. We've elected you to do this, to make this decision.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. May.

Ms. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you, and I'd like to thank our two panellists for being here this evening. To members of the audience, thank you for being here. I know there are some people who were here earlier today, and thank you for staying.

I'm going to premise my question with a little sidebar because we hear a lot of comments in the open mike session—and I appreciate people having honest and frank conversations with us—but whenever some of us are asking questions, there's this big assumption that, "oh that's where they are going with it".

I want to make sure everyone understands that I'm speaking on my behalf, and that I'm asking questions—the good, the bad, and the ugly—about everything. That's my job. I don't have a preference because that's not my job. My job is to listen to Canadians. My job is to listen to what's out there. My job is to be able to understand the good, the bad, and the ugly so when I do make that decision on behalf of Canadians, I can do it with an educated decision.

I'm going to ask a question that I am sure is going to go on Twitter saying that all of a sudden I have a master plan. There's no master plan. I just want to make sure I'm understanding things.

Elizabeth, you can get ready to type.

•(1910)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Hands off Twitter.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** She mentioned a better and fairer system for voters. We've heard some testimony about the legitimacy of this committee. We've heard people say that we have to change the current system because it gives a false majority and that right now government has all the power, but they don't have the voice of the people. Then, in the same breath, they say to us, "but you have the mandate to change it". It's a contradiction. They are saying that we're changing the system that gave us a false majority, but that we have the power to change it.

I'm a little confused. If we are changing the system because we have this magical power, which we're using for evil, then how can you tell me I have the authorization to change? I just want to throw that out there. What are your thoughts about the legitimacy of this committee?

As you see, we've given up the majority. We are all working together. We're asking question after question. Can you give me your thoughts on what you think the legitimacy of this committee is in terms of making decisions regarding our electoral system?

**Mr. David Blain:** I'm happy to do that. I think there's no question that you are a legitimate committee. Our system up until this point in time has been first past the post. We have a majority government. You can agree with the system to get there or not, but that's what we have.

This committee was constituted in a unique manner, and I thank you for doing that. I think you are completely legitimate. I think you need to move forward and make your recommendation.

If you all agree, that's wonderful. If you don't all agree, I think you still need to make a majority in a minority recommendation.

Those are my thoughts.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you.

Professor Nash.

**Mr. David Nash:** I have watched this committee working a lot. I think it's totally legitimate. Furthermore, it's not just legitimate, but I think it's doing a very good job and being very fair, and that includes all the members. They are open-minded, and that's all I can say.

There are things being said by people who I would not expect to say them, which indicates their full understanding of the dimension of the committee. That's all you can ask of it.

You are not the final arbiters of this thing. You will give an opinion, but the House of Commons will be the ultimate arbiter. Presumably it could be one that's forced by the majority government, but that's not necessarily the case.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Chair.

I think what we're seeing tonight, especially today and in the past 10 days, is democracy at its best. You have in front of you 13 MPs from five different parties, sharing not exactly the same opinion but sharing the same goal: serving our people. That's what democracy is all about. That's what our system is all about. This is why I thank the chair again. He let me express myself, just for a few seconds during the last session. Everyone here, what you are seeing tonight is exactly what we're doing in the House of Commons, except for question period. I do recognize that. I can also tell you I love question period, but that's not the point.

Let's talk about democracy. You share the principle of democracy, as we all share it, but let's talk about a referendum. Isn't it the best way to know exactly where people stand?

I do recognize the fact that, yes, this is a complex issue and we shall take all the time necessary. I'm sure you have remarked by my accent that I'm from Quebec, and we had the experience of a very touchy, difficult decision to make: get out or stay in Canada. Technically, constitutionally speaking, the PQ government could have called its independence just by a majority vote in the National Assembly. Thanks to René Lévesque, he said that this will shall be expressed by the people, by a referendum.

What we're talking about today, maybe we cannot share the same point of view, but as far as I'm concerned, the electoral system is the most precious institution in any democracy, because all the rest belongs to the way we elect our representatives. The Prime Minister, the cabinet, budget, external affairs, defence policy, everything belongs to the way we elect our people, so this is, as far as I'm concerned, a most important institution. Will this change that without asking people the question? I want to hear your thoughts on that.

●(1915)

**Mr. David Blain:** I still wouldn't have a referendum. I think there are rights issues in here, in the Charter of Rights. We're moving slowly, as a country, toward effective representation. We're not there yet.

In moving toward effective representation, I think we should take a huge step that way, but I don't think that's a referendum question. Besides, we elect the MPs. They have the authority to do the job. If the people don't like the job they did, they will say it at the polls.

I am not for a referendum because of the education and the human rights side.

**Mr. David Nash:** I really don't like the idea of a referendum, and I've told you why. It's a question of minority rights. On the other hand, if there are enough members on this committee who wish to see a referendum, they should certainly express that view.

I think that probably it should only be an advisory referendum, not of the kind that would change the law. I also think that, if this committee were to recommend any kind of referendum or any kind of referendum were accepted by the government, it should be a referendum, which, if lost in changing the electoral system, should result in the immediate reconvening of this or a similar committee to consider the question again.

I do not believe that proportional representation should be blockable by a majority of the country. They can vote against the government that brought it in if they object.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds left, Mr. Deltell.

[English]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I'll say just a quick word.

I want to inform you that the minister said here that she is not linked to any decision made by this committee. At the end of the day, if we don't have a referendum, there is only one person who will decide, and that is the Prime Minister, because he controls the executive and he controls the legislature with his majority.

We prefer to let the people decide, instead of giving the right to only one voice to decide the future of the electoral system of this country.

●(1920)

**Mr. David Nash:** May I comment?

**The Chair:** Very briefly, please.

**Mr. David Nash:** The government, if it brings in a system that is unfair, will have to face the population, and I think one should look very carefully at the situation. In B.C., when they went to the alternative vote, both of the parties in favour of that were booted at the next election. I think that would happen if anything evil were done by the government.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. DeCoursey, please.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I recall the minister stating clearly that she looked forward to receiving the recommendations from this committee, which impressed upon me then and continues to impress upon me the importance of this committee's work in trying to find some consensus recommendations to deliver to the executive branch. Of course, we know this is the first step in what could be a very intriguing process. This whole process has been intriguing for me and has been one of a lot of self-education on a variety of issues: the substance of electoral reform, governance in general, and the politics at play in this whole conversation, which is fascinating as well.

One thing I struggle with, or that I'm having a hard time to grasp, is how it's a question of minority rights. I'm not a legal scholar. I do understand the basic premise of minority rights as ensuring that, for example, persons from a racialized minority or from other disadvantaged situations are afforded the same equality as everyone else, but are we extending that interpretation to include partisan leanings or political affiliation? Please help me with that.

**Mr. David Nash:** I don't see it as a different matter. People in Canada have the right to vote. Minority groups in Canada do not have the right to have their vote properly recognized, so this is a minority right.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Partisan interests...?

**Mr. David Nash:** Partisan interests or whatever else you want to put it down as; you may just end up with a lot of Sikhs running the country. I don't know what's going on. I'm simply saying that any group that is small and has a unique view of the world has the right in this country to have that view expressed, if it's a sufficiently large group.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Cannot persons of ethnic minority find representation in the system now? They can run for office—

**Mr. David Nash:** Of course they can.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Of course, we're always moving to more effective representation, and I'd love to hear from Mr. Blain as well.

Effective representation can mean a lot of different things. It could mean better representation in Parliament of the political choice of electors. It could mean a government that is able to effectively produce public policy. It can be a loaded term, so share with me your reflections on that.

**Mr. David Blain:** I go beyond that, because unless the body we elect is a mirror image of the people of Canada, not only in terms of political leanings but also in terms of ethnic background, race, and gender, we don't have effective representation. Effective representation means that we should have 50% women and the appropriate percentage of aboriginal people represented in the House.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Is that a matter of political will as much as anything else?

**Mr. David Blain:** No.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** It's not?

**Mr. David Blain:** I don't think so, because our electoral system doesn't do it. The first past the post system simply does not represent small parties and minorities as well as a larger group of votes over a broader area.

Check STV. With first past the post, you need 30%, 40%, or 50%. That's 30,000 to 40,000 votes to get elected. Those don't represent the people. If you put several districts together and you have seven-member districts, you can get elected with 12.5% of the vote, but everybody going to Parliament is going to have 80,000 votes. That's equal legislative power.

For minorities, both in terms of women and in terms of indigenous people, we need to have quotas. There's no question in my mind about it. Even though STV helps that process, we need to accelerate it. We need everybody represented. We're way behind.

• (1925)

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** I can accept, then, that interpretation of effective representation is having Parliament near what Canada looks like.

Is it fair to say that there are other ways to interpret that effectiveness of representation?

**Mr. David Blain:** Anybody can interpret it however they want, but the courts when they interpret it, and I'm not a lawyer—

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Neither am I. We share that in common.

**Mr. David Blain:** They said that the candidates talked about slow, uneven steps toward effective representation, and first past the post is clearly, in my mind, not effective representation.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Jolibois, please.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Thank you very much for both your inputs.

Mr. Blain, I'm sitting here thinking that you said equal votes for equal representation. I come from a riding.... I own half of the province, but yet we don't have a population of 80,000 in that area. I'm trying to figure out what that would look like under your proposal.

**Mr. David Blain:** Basically, for seven-member districts, it's like taking seven current electoral districts and putting them together. Within that group of districts—which might be the northern half of Saskatchewan, for example, probably going down below Davidson and that area—all of the people in that area would rank the many candidates who'd run. You would have several candidates running for each political party. The voter would then get to choose which they preferred by ranking each candidate.

I didn't bother to explain STV. I'm sorry. I should have taken the extra time to do that, but it's simply a ranking system. What happens is that you end up electing seven people. There's a quota system in a seven-member district. You take seven plus one is eight. Then you take one eighth of the voters, 12.5% of the vote, and everybody who reaches 12.5% of the vote plus one vote gets elected. The ballots in excess get transferred over to the next one. The second choices get transferred over in proportion to what's left over.

I think it does a better job. In Australia it does an amazing job. The Senate has long outperformed the House of Representatives, which uses alternative vote, single-member district, in terms of the representation of women and the representation of the aboriginal people of Australia.

It does a good job in that sense, but I don't think that's fast enough for those two groups.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** I am listening to the words around “equal, fair representation”. I am a Canadian, but I live in northern Saskatchewan. When I look around my community and I see the disparities that exist and that it's still not equal under the current system, I agree with that. However, I'm still trying to figure out what each proposal would look like for the mid north in the provinces and for the Far North.

**Mr. David Blain:** I don't know if I have much more to add. In terms of the Far North, I would respect the territorial boundaries of the Far North in terms of the three northern territories and let them each elect one member, as they do now. As for northern Saskatchewan, I know that area is huge; I grew up in Saskatchewan. It is merely the electoral system that I'm talking about because there are many other things that need to be addressed on a two-nation basis. That goes beyond what I am talking about with regard to the electoral system.

New Zealand did it with quotas for the Maori people. In fact, the Maori people now exceed the base quota. They are a larger portion of the House there than their percentage of the population.

It can be done with a good system and quotas.

• (1930)

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Do you have any thoughts, Mr. Nash?

**Mr. David Nash:** Yes. I think I've tried to deal with the problem of large ridings in the north, but in provinces, by simply including them despite their slightly lower populations. If they're unreasonably large, and you can't make them any larger...by including them as if they are ridings in all respects except their low population, similar to all the other ridings in a proportionality zone.

The question that came to me when I was thinking about this, however, is that I want to know whether the first nations, and the Métis and the Inuit, have a means they would be happy with for representation. And I think that basically it's not the rest of Canada's job to deal with that problem. I think it's a question that the federal government has jurisdiction over first nations and has to come up with a system within whatever other system we choose that satisfies them. And that could include their simply saying, "We'll throw our lot in with the general new system. We're happy with that."

I think, for example, in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, it may well be that there will be a focused first nations interest group that will put up candidates, and I don't see there's anything wrong with that in exactly the same system as everybody else is using. They would get representation in a fair proportional representation system.

Edmonton has an area of something around 300,000 persons, and they would probably take five seats.

**Ms. Georgina Jolibois:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to respond to the argument that having a referendum on an issue that involves rights is somehow a terrible anti-rights position to take. As a historian, I would submit that this argument is ahistorical and inaccurate.

I'm also a former resident of Australia, a country very similar to Canada in many ways, a country that is, however, characterized by the fact that it can't amend its constitution without a referendum. It has had a number of referenda on rights issues, and we have a chance to see how enlightened the politicians are versus the people, when one of these things occurs.

In the early 1950s, the Menzies government in Australia sought to take away the right of people to join the Communist Party, to ban

communism. The courts, quite reasonably, ruled that unconstitutional. The Menzies government then tried to seek, via a referendum, a mandate to take away the rights of communists, and the people rejected it. The people were more enlightened and were stronger defenders of rights than was the government.

Similarly, in the 1960s the Australians had to amend their constitution in order to give voting rights to aboriginals. The majority in favour of extending voting rights to aboriginals was 90.77%, the highest majority they've had on any of the referenda in the nation's history. Australians fervently adopted the expansion of democracy when given a chance to do so in a referendum.

We've heard a trope. Neither of the two witnesses here have said it, but people in the audience have done so. They did so last night, and they did so the night before in Victoria. If we'd had the ability to have a referendum on women's votes in Canada, women would not have been granted the vote in 1917. A referendum would have effectively prevented women from being granted the right to vote in 1917.

I thought I might just read to you from the Wikipedia article about the Wartime Elections Act—Elizabeth, you might enjoy this—the act that granted the vote to women. Here's what it says:

The Wartime Elections Act was a bill passed on September 20, 1917 by the Conservative government of Robert Borden during the Conscription Crisis of 1917....

The act gave the vote to the wives, widows, mothers, and sisters of soldiers serving overseas—

But not other women.

—They were the first women ever to be able to vote in Canadian federal elections, and were also a group that was strongly in favour of conscription. The act also disenfranchised "enemy-alien" citizens naturalized after March 31, 1902, unless they had relatives serving in the armed forces.

The purpose of this law was to rig the election. Would that have passed a referendum? No, it would not. The people are better protectors of democratic rights via referendum than are the politicians, who are self-serving to a fault when given a chance to change their electoral system.

Mr. Blain, you asserted...or actually, maybe you, Professor Nash, that if governments try to manipulate the electoral system, the voters can punish them. That is much harder to do after the rules of the game have been changed. I thought I was going to beat you in hockey, but it turns out you decided we're playing soccer now.

In Canada, in Manitoba, in the early 1920s the government of the day changed the electoral system to STP in urban areas and alternative vote in rural areas as a way of freezing out the labourites, who were rising at the time. The same thing was done in Alberta. Those governments were not punished for that. They benefited from that. Then when that system started to work against the governments in the 1950s in both provinces, they switched to first past the post. They weren't punished for that either, and it benefited them.

In 1918 in Australia, in order to prevent the Labor Party from rising, the National and Liberal parties, realizing that they could benefit from each other's second preferences, adopted the alternative or preferential voting system. Were they punished? No. They kept Labor out of power, a system that I say still benefits them to this day vis-à-vis Labor. Now, in B.C., in 1951, the government miscalculated. So one time out of five, the government is actually punished for abusing democracy, for rigging the rules to benefit itself.

I see that as a very poor record. I submit to you that the people are the best guardians of rights. History demonstrates it. Politicians are the worst people; we are interested parties.

I hope we come to a consensus on this committee. The consensus could be in favour of multi-member proportional or STV or one of a number of other possibilities, including the very interesting one we heard earlier today from Mr. Graham, but it has to be on a referendum to confirm that the people of Canada think it's a good idea, that they get to vote on it beforehand. It is not reasonable to say to people, "We are going to take a system and pass it for your benefit. You get no say on whether it's good until it's already done."

• (1935)

What happens if you vote against it after the fact, after we've had an election, and we finally get our referendum and it turns out people didn't like it? I hear the arguments, in Ontario it was voted down, in P.E.I. it was voted down, people are not well-enough informed. Well, I submit that if you can't convince the people to change something, you have no right to say, "Therefore, I get to impose it on them. It's their fault that I could not convince them of that." That is so undemocratic. And to do it in the service of changing an electoral system that is supposed to be more enlightened, that is quite unacceptable, I submit to you.

I know I've used up all my time in a rant instead of with questions, but I really wanted to get that off my chest for the benefit of everybody.

**The Chair:** There were some interesting historical ideas that were presented, but I hope you understand there's no time for a question.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I do understand.

**The Chair:** But it was interesting.

Ms. Sahota, please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Thank you, and thank you to the presenters.

I'm a little confused. When my colleague asked about a minority rights issue, I tend to a little bit start to agree with what my colleague across the aisle was saying. Scott, it's probably the first time I've said that on electoral reform.

I mean no disrespect, but on this issue of a referendum I don't see how... I understand the concept that you can't ask the majority to decide on a minority right, and that's why we have the wonderful Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think it's essential that we have that document protect minority rights in this country. I think it does a really fantastic job in doing so. But right now, as we're going across the country from conference room to conference room, we're not seeing minorities come out to take part in this discussion, regardless of whether maybe it's our fault. Perhaps this committee is not doing a

good enough job at reaching out to them and trying to figure out what system they would like to see implemented.

We did make a stop in some first nations communities, but it still hasn't been enough. We haven't had a proper representative portion of that community coming out to say what they want. So how do we make a decision to say what is best for minorities, that this electoral system is what the minorities or what women in Canada—you name it—want, without almost asking them at this point now?

What better method can we use to reach them?

• (1940)

**Mr. David Nash:** How do you get more people out, more minorities out? Well, I'm a minority. I have only voted for two MPs, twice, and I had my candidate win. I have a minority view of the world, and I actually resent the fact that my view doesn't get properly expressed.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** You're talking about—

**Mr. David Nash:** I'm a minority, and all minorities should be coming out—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** In terms of the issues you believe in and in terms of maybe the party you support, so small parties are considered. Is that who you're defining as a minority, or—

**Mr. David Nash:** Well, I'm a minority, because majorities win power and my party doesn't. That's very simple, that's all I'm talking about.

I would like to see a parliament in which I would be represented to the degree that fellow travellers in my views of the country... and I think there is a real chance that with two parties in this country, which have benefited very much by first past the post, an attempt to change that via a referendum would, in fact, fail. However, I think you people should be open to the possibility of doing it that way. The only thing I would say is that if the attempt fails, we have to go at it again because it's still unfair.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** In terms of those who support smaller parties, I think that view has been well represented before this committee, which is a good thing. We've had a lot of people coming out and supporting the point of view that they voted for a party that's never been elected, or a candidate who's never been elected.

I can't close a session without asking you what you meant about Sikh fans uprooting this country one day.

**Mr. David Nash:** No, I didn't say that.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Would that be under the first past the post system or under MMP? What system would this be?

**Mr. David Nash:** I think I said you may end up getting a whole bunch of Sikhs.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What does that mean?

**Mr. David Nash:** They're an individual group of people who could conceivably decide that they're going to form a party of their own.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Under a new system?

**Mr. David Nash:** Under a new system. I think they have a perfect right to do so if they want to.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Would that be a good thing in your opinion or a bad thing? I don't understand what you're saying.

**Mr. David Nash:** Everybody who has a legitimate view of the world has the right to have that expressed in Parliament in proportion to the degree that they do.

I would hope very much that we would stay ecumenical since, really, it would be unfortunate.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Yes, but do you think a new system could create parties based on religious views?

**Mr. David Nash:** I hope not, but if a religious group could get enough votes then they deserve to be represented. I don't see anything wrong with it. I would certainly put in provisions that they had to have a reason—

• (1945)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** But you said you hoped not.

**Mr. David Nash:** Yes, but there is, in the scheme that I'm talking about, a certain restriction on the size of voting group that you would have to have in order to get an MP elected. Very minor religions wouldn't be able to do that. I don't ask for nationwide proportionality. I ask for it within smaller areas that are self-limiting in terms of the lowest number of votes that you could have to get a person—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I would probably hope not as well. I think that now we have a Canada where, regardless of your religious affiliation or background, you choose parties or vote for candidates with similar political views and a similar world view, not necessarily for their religious views.

**Mr. David Nash:** There are some people who regard a religious view as a political view. You can't avoid that. I don't think it would have any great impact as the case is. I just pulled out the possibility that if there is an identifiable minority that is very active in terms of its own internal activities, they could conceivably run a party. Certainly in other countries there are religious-based parties.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That brings us to the close of our Q and A session.

Thank you for your ideas and for stimulating some good back and forth discussion. In fact, what we're looking for at this committee is to engage with the witnesses and explore new areas of this issue.

We'll go the citizens list. I'll just explain again for those who might not have been here earlier that we limit the citizens' statements to two minutes, which seems to have become recognized as a reasonable period of time. It's been adhered to the great majority of the time in all the cities we've been in. It seems to be just the right amount of time to express an idea and for people to digest that idea.

Why don't you go first, Ms. Pon, for two minutes please?

**Ms. Natalie Pon (As an Individual):** Thank you, Chair.

I am here today to voice my support for a referendum. I want to present two reasons for this. First, the town halls I've attended in Edmonton so far haven't resulted in a consensus being formed amongst those attending. Second, in the 2015 election no political party actually campaigned for any particular form of proportional representation beyond just saying that we'd have no more first past the post elections.

With regard to the town halls in Edmonton, I've attended all three so far, as have many people in the audience today. What I've noticed in each of these is that while a lot of viewpoints are expressed for different forms of proportional representation, and people can tend to agree that proportional representation will have some general benefits, we can never really determine which is the best form of it. There are so many different forms, including STV and multi-member proportional representation, but there's no consensus on which one is the best.

You know, we come up with these anecdotes on the potential benefits—i.e., we might engage more young people to vote—but there's no real basis for these statements, especially given the fact that none of these people presenting them can ever agree on which form of proportional representation will result in benefits, what those benefits will be, or the best system for this. Ultimately I found at these town halls that no consensus was ever formed. It's really hard for me to justify these processes as a consultation when we don't even know what Canadians want as a result.

My second reason for supporting a referendum is the fact that no party actually campaigned for any particular form of proportional representation in the last election. We had political parties stating that 2015 would be the last election under first past the post, but no actual proposal or alternative was put forward for Canadians to support. As a result, Canadians didn't actually vote for electoral reform. They just voted for parties, and maybe they had other ballot box issues driving them to the polls to support them for these issues. We didn't have the Liberal Party saying they supported alternative vote, and we didn't have the Conservatives saying they supported first past the post, so it's a little bit rich, in my opinion, to hear the statements, especially from the minister, that Canadians voted for electoral reform. I don't see this as the case when no particular form of electoral reform was actually proposed going forward in this election.

Given that no consensus was actually formed at town halls and given the fact that no political party actually campaigned for any particular type of electoral system in the last election, it is my understanding that the only way to actually gain an understanding of what Canadians want is by a referendum.

Thank you.

• (1950)

**The Chair:** Understood. Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Jackson.

**Ms. Kristy Jackson (As an Individual):** All right.

I'm a civil servant for the federal government. I guess I just wanted to bring the perspective that I see the current system as being very detrimental to the effectiveness and efficiency of how the bureaucracy operates altogether. I've been there for over a decade. I've seen how we go in one direction for a while, and then something changes when another majority government comes along.

This is a false majority, let's remember, as it doesn't actually represent the majority of Canadians. They have unchecked power to take us in a direction. Then when the next government comes in and has a different perspective, they will start undoing everything we've been doing. We get nowhere and we see no progress. As a public servant, I find it very depressing to see this.

As a result, I think what we need to do is decide that proportional representation means that every vote will count toward effective representation of your views and your values. Whatever minority opinions you might have, you'll find your voice represented through having all the voices at the table and through co-operating, like we need to do in 2016, to make progress on all the important issues of our time. We need to act on climate change. We need an economy that works, and it can work through a green economy.

You guys have a lot to consider, a lot of different types of PR that you need to wrap your heads around, but the basic principle of proportional representation cannot be denied. We need effective representation in Canada.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Goshko, please.

**Ms. Susanne Goshko (As an Individual):** Hello, my name is Suzanne Goshko and I'm a member of Fair Vote .

I would like to say that this year we are commemorating Alberta women getting the right to vote provincially. This also happened in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We are equal now because we can vote. Can we be equal when we vote? I support proportional representation, and as I said, I'm part of Fair Vote.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Susanne Goshko:** Mr. Chair, could I just mention one other thing?

**The Chair:** Of course.

**Ms. Susanne Goshko:** When I was canvassing for Fair Vote during the federal election, both the Green Party and the NDP were supportive of proportional representation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Peacock, go ahead.

**Ms. Vanessa Peacock (As an Individual):** I'd like to thank the committee for having this open mike and giving us the opportunity to voice our opinions.

I'm for proportional representation, and I wanted to share my opinion about why I do not want a referendum, as much as I love voting. There are two principles to this. First, I work in health care, so I consider the knowledge of harm as a principle. I think we've

heard enough expert testimony that we can agree that there is harm in our current system. People are being essentially disenfranchised and deprived of their full representation.

When you have a referendum, the full knowledge of the harms and the benefits don't always get down to the voter. I'm from B.C. and I was there during the 2005 referendum on the single transferable vote. I know a number of people who voted against it and who had no idea what it was about. One of my mom's best friends voted against it thinking it would somehow allow Quebec votes to influence the B.C. referendum on the legal transferable vote.

Unless you're going to have some kind of a testing, where people are given enough information on the impacts of a referendum on proportional representation to make it possible for them to give informed consent, the way we expect when we consent to a medical treatment, then we can't allow people to vote against their best interests. We don't allow this in medicine and we don't allow it in things like workers' rights. For example, a person who is not aware of their rights is not allowed to sign them away to do unpaid overtime hours.

I feel this should be considered when we think about a referendum for something we know is in the people's best interests, and when there is a likelihood that they could vote against their best interests without knowing what they're doing.

I also believe there is a mandate for the Liberal government to bring this forward without a referendum, because they had it in their campaign promise. They may not have spoken specifically about the type of representation, but people voted that government in with it clearly in their platform that this was to come, so I think we have the mandate to proceed with this.

Thank you.

• (1955)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Wodak, go ahead, please.

**Mr. John Wodak (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I asked to be put on the speakers list either in spite of the fact that I've been here all afternoon or because of that. You can judge afterwards.

The first point I want to make is that elections are not an end in themselves; they're a means to an end. That end is to select a government, and conventional wisdom says that we citizens get the government we deserve. However, if we're not satisfied with the government we get, we tend to blame everyone but ourselves. Hence, at this time, the demand for a change in process. We're not satisfied with the previous government.

Let me offer you a cynical hypothesis. If you were to stand outside a polling station on election day and question the voters as they left the station, they would all be able to tell you which party they voted for. Probably most of them would be able to tell you the leader of the party, but many of them might not know the name of the candidate they just voted for, and very few of them would be able to name all the candidates. That's just a theory, and I'm not about to test it at the next election.

I'm not endorsing any particular process, but there are two things that I would like to identify as being important. First, we need somehow to create a process that encourages, engages, and informs citizens. Second, we need a process that is not susceptible to fraud. There are plenty of examples in the world today, but the one that comes to mind is Germany in 1933.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Pettit.

**Ms. Reta Pettit (As an Individual):** Is it Ruby? If you're wanting to have minority groups, get a bunch of your Tim Hortons' people or the maids who are looking after the people up here, and they will give you their opinion. That's where those people are right now, they're working, and that's one reason that there aren't any of them here.

I do not support a referendum. I feel, as the previous person said, that this was brought forth as part of the mandate of what the Liberal government was going to do. It was in their platform. I feel that we can give our representatives who are in Ottawa the right to go ahead and prepare a proportional representation method. I think they'll have to spend a lot of time really figuring out the best one. I also think we can try this new system. If it doesn't work, there's nothing to say we can't go back and look at it again to see how we can improve it. But we definitely need a change. On the lack of people going out to the polls and so forth, you just hear, "Well, what's the point? Why should I vote? They don't represent what I want, anyway."

Thank you.

• (2000)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiebe, please.

**Mr. Jeremy Wiebe (As an Individual):** Hello. My name is Jeremy Wiebe. I'm a teacher here in Edmonton, and electoral reform is something I care a lot about.

I'm glad that this committee is meeting and engaging the public on electoral reform, and I want to express my support for proportional representation of most any stripe.

That being said, I think one of the criticisms of MMP that was not mentioned today is that it gives political parties too much power in selecting, forgive the term, I'm going to call them surplus candidates. I forget the term that was used earlier.

My question is, why should an individual who the public could very well have rejected be representing people? I think that's an important question.

I would prefer STV. I think that while it is complicated for those who count the votes, it is simple for voters. First past the post is simple for those who count the votes, but it is very complicated for voters. For those who care about individual issues...do I vote for the party I believe in or do I vote for the person most likely to win and closer to where I'm at?

Also, I want to express my opposition to a referendum. We need only look to the recent referendum in the U.K. to see why it's a bad idea.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That brings us to the end of our list. We've had really good meetings out west in B.C. and Alberta. I think it's fair to say that a new dimension has arisen. I think it started in Victoria with this whole discussion of rights, a change in the voting system being about rights, and the debate that's taking place around that, including tonight, where we've heard different perspectives on the issue. Our tour out west has added some new dimensions to the discussion, and that's what it's all about going across the country, quite frankly. It's about getting new perspectives. Sometimes it might be particular, for whatever reason, to one part of the country or the other.

I thank you all for being here tonight in Leduc. We came to Leduc because we were trying to not always be in the cities. We've gone to some rural areas and small towns just so that we don't always get an urban perspective.

Oh, there's more. Mr. Johnston wanted to speak as well.

Go ahead, Mr. Johnston.

**Mr. Peter Johnston:** I apologize for being the last again, I didn't realize I had to re-register for this session.

I want to thank you all for being here.

I'm really concerned about the planet. The destruction of the environment is by far the most important problem facing humankind at the moment, and, unfortunately, not just humankind. We have to change the system so we can get on with it.

As you may understand, I'm a bit of a radical, and I represent a large group of Canadians who have a superficial understanding of what's going on, and I'm really mad because we're not getting on with it. And unless we change the system, we'll continue to blah, blah, blah about it. We don't even mention the environment enough. This is the most important thing facing the world today, and if we had a different electoral system, then small parties—and of course I'm thinking about the Green Party, but it applies to any party—would have a say, and they must have a proper say, because the main parties are just the status quo, and the status quo is consume as much as you can, make as much money as you can, and to hell with everything else. And we have to change the whole system so that the smaller parties, and the groups that are concerned about what is happening to the planet can have a voice.

I admire what our gentleman from Australia said; one of the problems with referendums is that people are scared that the vote will go the wrong way. That's democracy. The majority of Canadians want much more action on the environment and climate change and do not want to have to support the gang of NATO that is led by the bully south of here going around invading other countries because we don't like the way they do things.

Let's change the system and get true democracy happening. I'd like to get rid of parties. Why do we have parties? We're in a team game. I want the individual to have a say. If the results don't go the way you want, then too bad.

Thank you very much.

• (2005)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll end with Ms. Workman, please.

**Ms. Heather Workman:** Thank you to everyone for coming here today, but I do want to stress, again, that obviously climate change is something that's very real. I'm from Alberta. I've lived here for over 45 years, and what is happening to our climate is absolutely appalling. We need to protect the green spaces in this country. The only way we're going to do this is if we have proportional representation.

And I know what I'm talking about, because I had the guts, in ground zero, to put my name on the ballot under the Green Party of

Canada. I did that because I love this country, and because under that particular format, and the leader we have, we have the flexibility to speak the way we wish.

As you noted here tonight, you saw an awful lot of people from Alberta speaking. What you are hearing is what Albertans want, and the majority of us want, is proportional representation. I am not in favour of a referendum. I'm noticing the Conservatives are huddling in a corner over there as well. But that's just me.

Sorry, I love Conservatives, don't get me wrong, but I notice that you guys are not mixing.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I think that wraps up our session.

Thank you to everyone, including the members, and we'll see you tomorrow.

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