Special Committee on Electoral Reform

EVIDENCE

Monday, August 22, 2016

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Chair

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

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● (1805)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): We're now at meeting number 14 of our special committee's study of electoral reform.

We have three witnesses this evening. Thank you so much for making the time to be here not only in the summertime, but also the evening.

I would like to take a moment to briefly introduce our three witnesses. Professor Nathalie Des Rosiers is currently the dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, and former general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. She is also former president of the Law Commission of Canada and a member of Fair Vote Canada's national advisory board. Professor Des Rosiers has been awarded the Order of Canada for her work on advancing civil liberties and has received numerous other accolades, including being named one of Canada's 10 nation-builders in 2010 by *The Globe and Mail*.

[*Translation*]

Christian Dufour is a lawyer, political scientist, writer and commentator. A columnist for *Journal de Montréal* and *Journal de Québec*, Mr. Dufour is also a researcher and a professor at the École nationale d'administration publique in Montreal. His areas of research include democratic institutions and electoral reform.

Through his work in the Quebec public service, Mr. Dufour acquired considerable experience in intergovernmental affairs. He has published numerous works on Quebec's identity, and on linguistic and political issues.

[*English*]

Harold Jansen is an associate professor of political science at the University of Lethbridge. Dr. Jansen has focused part of his research on electoral systems and electoral reform, as well as on the impact of the Internet on political communication and democratic citizenship. He has also researched the use of preferential voting, namely the single transferable vote, and alternative vote systems in Canada.

Welcome to all three of you. We're greatly looking forward to the insight you will be providing to us.

We'll start with Ms. Des Rosiers, if that's okay.

[*Translation*]

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers (Dean, Faculty of Law, Civil Law, Ottawa University, As an Individual): Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the committee for inviting me to appear today. I will speak in English and in French. Copies of my presentation have already been distributed.

Today, I am speaking as a former president of the Law Commission of Canada, which produced a report titled "Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada" in 2004. I thought the committee may benefit from understanding the reasoning behind the report and our view of the issues Canada was facing then.

[*English*]

In general, I will make three points on this. First of all, certainly I think the commission was quite clear, based on its consultation and its work, that our current electoral system must be modernized. The first past the post system has too many disadvantages to support Canadians' present and future democratic aspirations. I will talk a little bit about the philosophical roots of the system and how it's a bit 19th century-ish in trying to respond to a 21st century society.

[*Translation*]

Our vision at the time was that the system must be reformed. We came to the conclusion that it was necessary to add an element of proportionality and curb the system's negative effects.

[*English*]

In a way, we were trying to maintain the good parts of the first past the post system while remedying the bad parts. It was a moderate report that was aimed at helping Canadians and Parliament grapple with this issue of electoral reform at that time. The moderate but resolute language was about engaging with this, stressing that modernization is essential. It was a progressive language of evolution of our electoral system.

The second point I want to make is important. Some electoral systems may exacerbate some of the distortions we see in our system, in particular the difficulty of our current system adequately reflecting the diversity of the Canadian population. Here I will talk a lot about gender equity. We should be mindful of this now and in the future, and my recommendation would be that if the committee is poised to recommend something other than what we had recommended, we would urge it to take into consideration the impact of its proposal on gender representation. I think that would be essential.

The third point I want to make is that the process of electoral reform is ongoing. We must look at the changes now, but we must also increase the institutional capacity to continue to monitor the effectiveness of change. In our report we recommended that after three elections there be a thorough evaluation of what's going on. We also recommended that there should be an institutional mechanism to have an ongoing ability to monitor what's going on and to make the institutional adaptations necessary.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

We should not have to wait for a legitimacy crisis to make changes to the voting system. In a way, I will ask your committee to consider the commission's recommendations. I am talking about all the recommendations; not only those on the system recommended by the commission, but also other recommendations, which had to do with the institutional capacity to properly assess what is happening in the system and to carefully examine gender representation issues.

[*English*]

I'll say a few words about the commission.

[*Translation*]

The commission was set up in 1997. Its mandate was to ensure that the law would remain relevant in Canada. It was a legislative body that reported to Parliament through the Minister of Justice.

The report on electoral reform was produced as part of a study on governance relationships in Canada. In particular, we were concerned that innovation, which seemed to be occurring around the world, was not reflected in Canada. Many new democratic practices implemented in other countries appeared to be struggling to emerge in Canada. The commission was independent and well placed to study the issue of electoral reform and begin the conversation on the topic.

Many issues came up in our consultations, including lowering the voting age and election financing. The commission followed its usual process. It created expert panels, held public consultations and developed web tools. A three-year process led to our report, in a way.

The reasoning behind the conclusions of our report was based on the following. Reform of the electoral system—that is, the method by which votes are translated into seats—is not a panacea. It does not resolve all political malaise or failures. In fact, the electoral system must be changed if it does not adequately reflect the values of a society or produces distortions that undermine the system's legitimacy. From a legal perspective, it is important for the parliamentary system to be viewed as legitimate. That is actually what gives the laws that are passed moral authority.

No electoral system is perfect. No system can perfectly address all values that a society may want to see addressed. However, systems can be assessed in terms of the preferences they assign to our values or the balance they establish among those values. The preferences of some systems come at too high a price. That was our conclusion regarding the first-past-the-post system. Its preference for stability was too costly, as it deprived us of a more adequate representativeness in terms of ideas and people.

[*English*]

We propose 13 criteria for the evaluation of the system, which are in the report and reflect some of the ones that you've identified already. I could talk about that and the report later. I'm still going to focus on why we chose MMP in the end.

We evaluated different families of systems in light of our criteria. One of them was certainly geographical and territorial representation. Another was fairness. Demographic representation came up over and over again in our consultation. There was also meaningfulness: voters do not want wasted votes, but want to have the impression that what they're doing is being translated adequately. There was also one person, one vote; an effective legislature; consensus-building; accountability; effective government; effective opposition; ease of administration; and ease of transition. The closer the new system is to the current system, the easier it will be.

We considered, though, that the political culture would evolve and that it's dangerous to try to predict how actors will act and who will be the winner and who will be the loser. Our view was that we indeed had a robust democratic culture in Canada and that actors would adapt to the new system and make it work, so there was a certain way in which it was dangerous to assume that there would be failures.

We did consider and look in-depth at the question of gender and minority representation. We did many consultations and many studies on that. We concluded that electoral reform alone could not ensure gender equality.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

That was a necessary but not sufficient condition. In our report,

[*English*]

we suggested that parties adopt additional measures, obviously to enlist women and minorities, and be accountable to Parliament for the measures they do or don't take. We made similar recommendations for indigenous representation.

We also made very specific recommendations for the type of MMP that could be implemented with closed-list thresholds.

Certainly, I think in terms of implementation, we did not recommend that a referendum be held but that the possibility be studied. Our view was that it was very difficult to determine, on a principled basis, why electoral reform as opposed to other legislative reforms—age of voting, party financing, symbolic requirements like citizenship—would require a referendum. For us it was more a question of

[*Translation*]

justifying why it would not be done in other contexts if this approach was used. As legal experts, we were concerned about ensuring the system's consistency.

In conclusion, electoral reform

[*English*]

is not a panacea, but is quite necessary at this time. It's normal to be reticent, but we should embrace the possibility of change and be confident that it's a vital step to improving public governance in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Jansen.

Mr. Jansen, go ahead.

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen (Professor of Political Science, University of Lethbridge, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to appear before this committee.

The way we translate citizen preferences into votes, and then those votes into seats, is fundamental to how democracy works in Canada. A serious discussion about the way we have been and could be doing this is long overdue. I can't think of a better way to spend an evening in August than to sit and talk about electoral systems.

As the chair pointed out, my research lies in two areas that might be of interest to the committee. First, in what seems like the increasingly distant past, I wrote my doctoral thesis on the use of the alternative vote and single transferable vote systems in Alberta and Manitoba between 1920 and 1955. I've read some of the testimony you've heard, so you've heard this already. These provinces used STV in the big cities and the alternative vote in the rural areas. These cases, along with British Columbia in 1952 and 1953, which used AV, represent the only uses of electoral systems other than the first past the post electoral system in provincial and federal elections. The use of STV, I think, is particularly interesting because it represents the only use of proportional electoral system in a context with political parties in Canada. I think we can, should, and do learn a lot from things around the world, but these examples provide some important domestic cases to help us understand how these systems might work.

I'm sure you're all going to be running out to read my doctoral thesis when this is done, but to save you the joys of reading 300 pages of turgid graduate student prose, I'll give you my major conclusions.

The second area where I do research that might be of interest to the committee is around Canadians' online political activity. My colleagues at four other Canadian universities and I have been surveying Canadians for the last two and a half years about their online political activities. In our surveys, we've asked a few questions about Canadians' attitudes toward online voting. This research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and part of what they asked us to do was to try to come up with knowledge that would be useful and inform public debates. We've only begun to start analyzing some of that data, so I'm going to give you some preliminary findings quite briefly at the end.

My research into the uses of preferential balloting in Canadian provincial elections has led me to conclude that the alternative vote is probably not the best option for Canada. The historical experience with AV suggests that it results in election outcomes that differ little from those we would encounter under the first past the post system, and it wouldn't do anything to address the most serious shortcoming of first past the post: the failure to produce a legislature that accurately reflects the preferences of Canadians. In Alberta and Manitoba, the system had no impact on proportionality, which is how political scientists measure the correspondence between seats and votes. It had no impact whatsoever.

Even if we look at the district level, the alternative vote produces results that differ little from first past the post. In the entire experience of Alberta, with over 30 years of using the alternative vote, fewer than 3% of all the seats contested would have turned out differently under AV than first past the post. In Manitoba, the number is less than 2%. In other words, in 97% to 98% of the cases, the person ahead on the first count ends up winning, and that person would have won under the first past the post system.

A big reason for that is that over half of Manitoba's voters, and nearly half of Alberta's voters, in the AV districts only bothered to indicate a first preference. Even though they can rank all the candidates, what we find is that many voters—and in Manitoba's case most voters—only indicate a first preference. They don't even bother with a second preference, let alone a third or subsequent preferences.

When we imagine how the alternative vote might work in Canada, we often cast our eyes toward Australia, but one of the things we often overlook in the Australian case, especially nationally, is that in Australia voters are legally compelled to rank each and every candidate. That's a big difference. In Canada, we didn't do that. There are, I would argue, some moral issues around that. Would we want to compel people to perhaps contribute to the election of a candidate or party that they fundamentally oppose? It might be their third choice out of four candidates. In Canada, we didn't do that, and when we leave voters to their own devices, many voters don't seem to want to indicate more than one preference. We tend to imagine a greater use of preferences than might be the case.

Another finding was that the alternative vote resulted in a significant increase in rejected ballots in all three provinces where it was used. In some of the cases, this was the result of various stringent ballot marking rules. In the case of Manitoba, they didn't have those stringent ballot marking rules, and we saw a tripling in the rate of rejected ballots. We might think it doesn't ask a lot of voters to write one, two, and three rather than an X, but there is some circumstantial evidence—and we don't have access to the ballots to know exactly what the problems were—that there were problems for voters, at least at that time.

● (1820)

By contrast, I'd argue the STV system used in Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg performed much better. It much more accurately reflected the wishes of voters in legislative representation.

We tend to focus on the fact that a move to a proportional electoral system would likely mean the end of majority governments, and I know this has been pointed out to the committee several times by now. But one of the things we often overlook is that such a system can ensure that we end up with an opposition that's sizable enough to do the job. I come from Alberta where provincially that's been a problem for much of its history. We don't tend to have large oppositions. The use of STV in Edmonton and Calgary during the Social Credit years actually was instrumental in ensuring that there was some opposition in the legislature. While Social Credit swept nearly all the rural seats, after they got rid of STV and AV after the 1955 election, Social Credit swept nearly all the seats in Edmonton and Calgary.

One of the purported benefits of STV is that voters can jump between candidates of different parties. But to what extent did they actually do this? Theoretically, you're right: they could pick, and I'll use the current federal context. They really like the Liberal candidate, then a Conservative, then a New Democrat, then a Green, then a Liberal, then a Conservative. They could go in whatever order they want to. But what I found, when we looked at how voters actually used it in Alberta and Manitoba, is that they tended to vote along party lines. If there was another candidate from that party available, 60% to 90% of transferred ballots stayed within the party. Once the last candidate from a party was eliminated, 35% to 40% of the votes were just by people who wouldn't indicate any more preferences after that. This suggests to me that fewer voters than we might anticipate take advantage of that freedom to jump between parties. This is one of the arguments made to support STV over other PR alternatives.

There are some costs with STV, which is that the ballots tend to be longer and more complex. We may not actually see as many voters taking advantage of the benefits as we might expect.

I'll just quickly say there was no impact on voter turnout in either system. Often this is cast as a potential benefit. I could find no evidence that it made any difference. There was also concern expressed that proportional representation could lead to a proliferation of parties, and I also found no evidence of that.

To me, the big take-away, looking at these cases, is to echo something that André Blais told you last month, that claims about other impacts of electoral systems on things like party formation and voter turnout should be taken with a bit of caution, as those kinds of things tend to have multiple causes. The electoral system can play a role, but it's not the only role.

The one thing that the electoral system does is alter the math of the translation of votes into seats. PR systems like STV or MMP or list PR do that much more accurately than first past the post, or the alternative vote. I'd argue that this is really the fundamental basis on which a decision about electoral reform should be made.

Quickly, when it comes to online voting, we find some interesting things. Our survey of the research shows that a significant proportion of Canadians have concerns about its safety, but they still are very interested in doing it. In our survey, 36% of Canadians thought that Internet voting was risky; 42% thought it was safe; and the rest weren't sure one way or the other. What I found very interesting, though, is that a third of the people who said it was risky still said they were very likely to vote online if it were available to them. I think it's because the risk doesn't accrue to them personally; it's a risk to the system, not to them personally.

That said, those who think it's safe are considerably more likely to vote online if they can. I think that if there were to be any move towards that, there would need to be some work done to reassure voters of the safety and security of it.

If it were an option, 55% of our respondents said they were very likely to vote online; 22% said they were somewhat likely. That's pretty staggering.

One caution: our survey was done through an online panel.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Prof. Harold Jansen: These are people who are very comfortable with online technology. I will absolutely tell you that it overstates the extent of the comfort. I can't tell you by how much, so bear that in mind.

The other thing we find—indeed, any political science research that does surveys—is that the kind of people who are willing to sit in front of their computer for 20 minutes answering questions about politics are very politically interested, so we get a very high voter response. This is just a problem we all face.

Among the small number of people who said they didn't vote, 48% said they would have very likely done so had online voting been available.

The last point I want to make about online voting is that I looked at some of the demographic predictors. Are there certain groups that could be left behind? Two stood out. Very high income people were most likely to say they would very likely vote online. And this isn't going to surprise you: it's people who are very comfortable with digital technology. This has been an emerging theme.

● (1825)

As more and more political activity moves online, our team is increasingly getting concerned about people who lack confidence in their digital skills. This suggests to me that any move to online voting should be pursued with some caution. It should be supplementary to what we have. It shouldn't replace the kinds of things Elections Canada always does, because there is a divide in digital skills that could end up disenfranchising voters.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I now invite Professor Dufour to take the floor.

You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

I would like to point out that, following the presentations, we will have two rounds of questioning, when each member will have five minutes to ask questions and get answers. In other words, the five minutes should cover both the questions and the answers. If someone puts a question to a witness, and there isn't enough time for the answer, they can always come back to it in the next round.

The floor is yours, Professor Dufour.

Mr. Christian Dufour (Political scientist, Analyst and Writer, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am honoured to be appearing before a House of Commons committee. At my venerable age, this is my first such appearance. Thank you for the invitation.

On Friday, I had a summary text titled "Two Deeply Different Dynamics" distributed to the committee members, since 10 minutes will not suffice for me to cover all the aspects.

During the question period following my presentation, I may have an opportunity to answer questions about the voting age, Internet voting or mandatory voting—topics I have not discussed in my text. In this presentation, I will stick to two of my most important points.

The first is about the reform process and the way to ensure its legitimacy, should the reform come to fruition—and that's no easy task. In the text, I tried to emphasize the deep difference between the dynamic of the current voting system, on the one hand, and that of proportional voting systems, on the other hand.

We are faced not only with technical or procedural differences, but also with structural changes. I do not have a lot of faith in adding small elements of proportionality. The dynamic is not the same. The political experience is different. It may change the way democracy and governance work in Canada.

I think it is clear that these are constitutional changes. That may not be the case in law, but in reality, I feel that it redefines how our democracy works. In addition, the voting system is an institution that has been in place in Canada for 150 years. We have had the same voting system since 1867. In fact, if the reform is implemented, it would arguably be the most significant reform made by the Trudeau government. That is why it is important for there to be true consensus in order to adopt this reform and ensure its legitimacy.

I am quite the francophone, but somewhere in my head, I am a British Conservative and am attached to the Westminster-style parliamentary system. Normally, the support of the official opposition is needed to achieve consensus because it is official and an attempt is being made to change an institution. The issue is in fact constitutional in nature, but at the very least, the institution is an old one that has been around for 150 years. I am not saying this because I support the Conservatives. That has nothing to do with it. It rather has to do with the institutional aspect.

If the official opposition does not agree, the government has no choice but to invite Canadians to participate in a referendum and choose between the existing voting system and a proportional voting system that this committee could recommend. It is important to keep that in mind, as I fear that we may be faced with a very dangerous precedent concerning a reform that affects an old institution belonging to Canadians.

The voting system does not belong to experts. It belongs to Canadians. Most experts are actually against the current voting system. I am one of the few who see some positive aspects in the existing voting system. To change it, things have to be done right. If the government was to create a precedent of a reform without the opposition's agreement and without a referendum, it would mean that another government could do the same four or five years down the line.

We should not turn into the French, who spend their time considering a change to their voting system and their Constitution. Therefore, the way to proceed is very important. It is also a way to convince people who are resistant to this change. Experts do not represent Canadians. With all due respect for experts, they do not see many redeeming qualities in the current voting system. I personally see many such qualities, and that is my second point.

In my text, I tried to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of the existing voting system, on the one hand, and proportional voting systems, on the other hand, as the current system is heavily criticized by elites, experts and intellectual communities. I think that is unfair, given that, for 150 years, the existing voting system has been assuring Canadians of what is at the heart of any functional democracy—regular peaceful replacement of partisan teams in power, through processes such as electoral sweeps.

●(1830)

We know that is a unique feature of our system, which rewards the winning party, and as a result, that party often has the majority. That is not something that originated in the 19th century or the 18th century. A year ago, a federal election was held. Most experts felt that the Conservative government, although worn out and unpopular, would be hard to defeat with the opposition being divided between the NDP and the Liberals.

What happened? At some point, Canadians hesitated between the NDP and the Liberal Party and finally focused on the Liberals, whom they elected with a majority to the people's satisfaction, I think. The surveys were clear on that.

I don't think a single Canadian expert had predicted a majority government. At best, people were saying that the NDP or the Liberal Party would perhaps manage to defeat the Conservatives, but that the result would be a minority government. The existing voting system is stronger than experts had thought because not so long ago—just a year ago—it produced the results Canadians wanted. That's the pragmatic side of politics, as it's not entirely rational or consistent.

We have a majority Liberal government. It may become unpopular, but at first, it was delivering the goods. I think this system deserves the chance to be kept it place if Canadians want to hold onto it. It may need to be modernized, but I think proof must be established to that effect.

I may be too much of a British Conservative, but it's wrong to say that it does not hold up. It has its strengths and its weaknesses, but it delivers the most important elements. It delivers governments that are strong, but that can also be voted out, and that's not nothing. In the context of globalization, which is dangerous, the powerlessness of democracies is something to be avoided. Our system ensures that governments often enjoy a majority. Without the current voting system, the Trudeau government would not have a majority. It does, but we can get rid it of eventually. We can vote it out and clean house. In Quebec, we say that a penny can be cleaned regularly.

Italy is another example. In that country, after the Second World War ended in 1945, the Christian Democratic Party dominated for several decades. It was rotting away for decades. A proportional voting system was in place and, after every election, the party would adopt a new approach by forming alliances with smaller parties. However, the same group always remained in power.

The voting system should perhaps be changed if things get to that point. It is easy to criticize the existing system because we are familiar with it. The problem with proportional voting systems is the fact that there are many of them. On July 27, André Blais said that it was practically impossible to predict what exactly the outcome may be.

To say the least, a precautionary principle ought to apply. If Canadians decide that it is time to change our system—I am a democrat, and I would lend my support, as it would not be the end of the world—it is important for the reform to be legitimate. I don't think the government can impose such a change. I am not an expert on this, but I think the decision belongs to Canadians. You are politicians, members of Parliament. You should beware of experts, as they will only criticize the current voting system. They are only in favour of proportional systems and discuss the differences between various types of proportional voting systems. They cannot see the forest for the trees, but the forest represents an old Canadian political dynamic, which is not perfect.

I think the proof is in the pudding, and tests have been done recently. That is why, if a reform is implemented, it should really be legitimate. That is how I feel about the issue. It would be absurd to carry out a reform to increase the system's legitimacy while the reform itself was illegitimate and viewed by Canadians as a power grab. I know that the expression "coup de force" was translated as "show of force", but an English-Canadian journalist friend told me that it should rather be "power grab".

●(1835)

Basically, Canadians would see this as a power grab by the elite, the majority of whom are opposed to the existing system. Elites are more intellectual. I underscored this in the text. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages. It is clear that a proportional system is viewed as more fair, but to be honest, I would say that a purely proportional system is absurd. Look at Israel....

The Chair: I don't want to stop your criticism of elites....

Mr. Christian Dufour: We're there. It's time.

The Chair: It's very interesting....

Mr. Christian Dufour: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You will have an opportunity to continue your presentation by answering questions later on.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now begin the first round of questioning.

Mrs. Romanado, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us this evening.

[*English*]

As you said, not everyone wants to sit in a dark committee room on an evening such as tonight, so thank you so much for being here.

There are three different presentations and a lot of topics. I wish we had three or four hours to get through a lot of these items.

I'll start with Professor Des Rosiers.

I didn't read it all, but I have read most of the report, and thank you for it. You talked in your 23 recommendations and your presentation about the importance of increasing diversity and gender representation among our elected officials and so on. We've also heard from other witnesses that a change to the voting system will not impact diversity and gender representation. In fact, a different tactic that could be used would be quota systems, and so on, and so forth. While we can't look at electoral reform as simply changing a voting system, it would not be the be all that ends all. In terms of engagement and participation, we heard a bit of your views on online voting, and I would love to hear more, Professor Jansen.

In terms of some of the recommendations you made in your report from a few years back, what would you tweak? Things have changed since the time you wrote that report. What would you recommend be tweaked in those recommendations you gave us?

●(1840)

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: The one I continue to be absolutely confident in is the assessment of the first past the post system. We may be happy at some point, but we have to look *dans la longue durée*. I think there have been too many instances of distortions. I continue to be confident about that.

One thing we did not do in 2004 is look at or simulate made-in-Canada solutions. Our process was to look at the family of systems that existed around the world and assess them on the basis of the criteria we had selected. I continue to think that the criteria we had selected remained valid, as well as the issue of the meaningfulness of voting, the issue of fairness, of ensuring

[*Translation*]

that it is a mirror of the nation. We talk about

[*English*]

—the idea of representation. I'm quite committed to that.

I also think that the recommendations we made on ongoing attention being paid to this issue are important and should be part of your report.

I continue to think that what we said on gender.... And there's no doubt, *ce n'est pas garantie*. The only advantage of creating more openness in the system and new ways for people to access elected office was to diversify *la classe politique*.

I have to say that in the context of our report, we had the occasion of a visit from the New Zealand Speaker of the House who had experienced the transition. Certainly his view was that there were new people who got elected, new types of people who got elected, and that at the beginning he was angry because they didn't know the rules. They were not behaving the way he liked. He looked a little like Winston Churchill. Then he turned around and said, but that was the right thing. It didn't take very long for some rules to change, for some new voices to be heard.

I continue to think that in whatever system we choose, there should be an added element of proportionality in some fashion. We must continue to pay attention to that. Otherwise, it's missing the mark, and we'll continue to have big swings. I think false majorities don't help us in the long run. A new government comes in and changes everything; the next one comes in and undercuts it. I think there's some cost to that. There was an expert who testified to the cost of big policy swings in terms of taxpayers' dollars. We didn't include that in our report, but I'm concerned about that.

● (1845)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

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

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to your Parliament.

Had we known, we may have invited you to appear before today, but it's never too late to do the right thing. That said, it is a pleasure to hear from you in this parliamentary committee.

I think that everyone agrees that our current system is far from perfect. Even those those who believe in it recognize that it has some major shortcoming. Be that as it may, there is no ideal system. We have been operating in the existing system for nearly 100 years. The system has been in place for 150 years, but there have been more than two dominant parties in Canada only over the last 100 years. There is a third, a fourth, and sometimes even a fifth party.

The fact that a third party would emerge with great strength at the right time is actually one of our current system's strong points. We saw this in 1994 with the Bloc Québécois, as well as with the emergence of the Reform Party. Later on, parties merged, became less popular or, conversely, more popular, but democracy was being exercised. The wheel turns and, at the end of the day, Canadians are deciding, in good conscience, what happens.

The wheel has turned 29 times over the past 100 years. We have held an election 29 times. Only once were conditions breached, so to speak, when it comes to democracy. Only once in 100 years of parliamentary democracy has the government been formed by a party that did not receive a majority of the votes. That happened in 1979.

It has happened in Quebec more often—three times. The fact remains that, in 1944 and 1966, it was caused by the distortion stemming from protected constituencies that existed in Quebec. As a result, one constituency may have had 10,000 residents, while a neighbouring constituency may have had 50,000.

So the batting average is not so bad. I agree with Mr. Dufour that the current system is far from perfect. However, it is not so bad and any changes to be made to it should be justified.

Mr. Dufour, it goes without saying that we have read the document you sent to us over the weekend. But this morning, your show of force has turned into a real bang on the table with a fist. Your essay does contain some strong words. You first use the term "show of force". Then, you talk about dangerous precedent.

What is it that worries you so much about the fact that the government is preparing to change the voting system without consulting Canadians? Why are your concerns so strong?

Mr. Christian Dufour: Frankly, I am not that worried. In fact, it is very difficult to change the voting system. A certain inertia weighs in favour of things staying as they are. It's an old institution that has been ingrained for 150 years. Those who are criticizing it have a louder voice. Intellectuals—and I apologize for talking about elites again—have access to the media and are highly organized. Nevertheless, to make changes in a system like ours, I think legitimacy is needed. It's an institution. So I am not that worried.

I must say I was still disappointed that the government has preliminarily rejected the idea of holding a referendum, given that a democratic rationale underlies the government's project. In fact, a referendum is not guaranteed, and neither is the official opposition. I repeat that I am a traditionalist when it comes to this. Our parliamentary system is based on the tradition of Westminster. For there to be true consensus, it's not enough for members to hold meetings around the kitchen table—I mean no disrespect—and it is not enough to consult people on the Internet. An institution is affected, so institutional consensus must be reached.

I think this is an opportunity to change the system. That much is clear. This is a government project. It may be time to change things, but don't take it for granted that Canadians have become committed to a proportional system. I must admit that my concern mainly comes from the fact that we do not know what we are getting into.

We know the current system well. André Blais said so. He is not a hothead, and you probably saw that when he appeared. He said it was very difficult to anticipate what would happen.

I am worried about a number of things. To be honest, and with all due respect for the House of Commons, I must say that political correctness was extremely strong in the wording of the House of Commons motion drafted by your committee. Of course, the motion talks about Canadians, our society, diversity, women, aboriginal peoples, young people, Canadians with a disability, new Canadians, and residents of rural and remote communities. We are clearly in 2016, but there is no mention of either regionalism in Canada or the profound regional differences that have characterized the country since 1867. The motion does not talk about linguistic differences. Not one word is said about that.

I read the entire transcript of the July 27 meeting, when Mr. Blais, Mr. Milner and Mr. Himelfarb appeared. I have gathered from it that a proportional voting system would reduce the representation of regional phenomena in the House as far as we can tell, as we do not know what kind of a system will be established.

● (1850)

The Chair: I apologize.

Mr. Christian Dufour: In fact, Mr. Milner....

The Chair: We have to move on to another member.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Sorry.

The Chair: I will let you finish what you were saying.

Mr. Christian Dufour: I was saying that Mr. Milner said that it will prevent the regional sweeps that helped the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party, as we do not have a functional Senate to express Canada's regional diversity. We must never forget that. The Senate does not play its role. It plays another role.

In other words, we are leaping into the unknown, and we have to be careful.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dufour.

Mr. Boulerice, go ahead.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us today. On behalf of the NDP, I am glad to have your participation in this important study.

Of course, for the New Democrats, the case of the first-past-the-post system—which I refer to as "first takes it all"—is pretty well established. We are familiar with its ability to create distortions.

Mr. Deltell doesn't seem to be overly angry that we had an election where the party that finished second in terms of the popular vote won the most seats.

Mr. Pelletier, who is here this afternoon, told us that this has happened three times in Quebec. It's not only a distortion of democracy; it's a reversal of the popular will. We are governed by a system where these distortions are occurring repeatedly.

In the latest election, some ridings in Quebec had three-way and four-way races, and candidates were elected with less than 30% of the votes. This means that, for the people of the riding, 70% of the votes may as well have been tossed in the recycling bin. Those

people are not represented in the House of Commons, in their Parliament.

We also saw some pretty terrible distortions during the election in the United Kingdom, last year. In Scotland, the Scottish National Party won 50% of the votes but 95% of the seats. Mr. Dufour may like regional sweeps, but if I were a labourite or a conservative in Scotland, I would be a bit angry about that.

Ms. Des Rosiers, in your study in 2004, you suggested a mixed proportional voting system, which is used in a number of countries. It leads to effective, responsible and relatively stable governments. It is used in the Scandinavian countries and in Germany. You had a preference for the Scottish system over the one in place in New Zealand or in Germany. Can you tell us what you felt were the virtues of each system?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: The Scottish system, which was the most recent one at the time, seemed to be more flexible, as it allowed voters to choose from what is referred to as a Jenkins list. They could choose between a party list and an open list, instead of choosing between a closed list and an open one. That seemed like an attractive approach to us.

We were always a bit worried during our analysis. That was 12 years ago, but I still worry about having a system where no compromises can be made. So we were definitely listening in order to find the most relevant way to resolve problems.

For instance, we had to make recommendations that would be consistent with Canadian law. We were very worried that there would be no limit to eliminating certain things, since the Supreme Court's decision seemed to indicate that it was not appropriate. That was another element of our thought process.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: That is relevant, as the Scottish model shows that, even in the Westminster tradition, changes can be made toward a moderate proportional voting system. I don't think anyone here would want our system to become extreme.

It's interesting that you say we should not take a recommendation at random and that everything forms a whole with interrelated effects. Of course, there is a lot of uncertainly, but there are also many international examples of how this has been done for decades.

At last year's Canadian election, we saw that the largest percentage of women in history were elected to the House of Commons. I say, well done. However, the women accounted for only 26% of MPs. At the current rate, based on the 2011 and 2015 elections, we will achieve gender parity in Parliament when my baby girl gets her old age pension.

What would you like to do to increase the role of women in Parliament more quickly?

● (1855)

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Determining whether the system is to blame or the matter is more complicated is always controversial. Clearly, the answer is that the issue is more complicated than it seems.

Objectively, we came to the conclusion that women seemed to face systemic barriers in terms of access to elected positions. Any human rights analysis would indicate that Canadians, according to survey value indexes, believe that equality between men and women in Canada is better than anywhere else in the world, but we are unable to achieve parity in Parliament.

The first indication was that the problem must be systemic.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Thériault.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): I will use this opportunity to speak to Ms. Des Rosiers.

Parity between men and women is important, and we need quality female politicians. We also have a hard time recruiting women. That is an existing situation. It's more difficult in federal politics than in municipal and provincial politics.

That said, you mentioned that there are legitimacy issues with the current voting system, which is outdated. Legitimacy establishes legality. An illegitimate law is a bad law.

So why adopt this position that a referendum must be held, but not necessarily a referendum?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: When it comes to principles, when must we stop demanding a referendum? That is why we put the issue in this context. In other words, there must be an ideological reason to make a distinction.

Let's take, for example, the amendments to the Citizenship Act. One may think that they are of high symbolic importance for Canadians, but does that mean they should be put to a referendum? That was more of a legal analysis. A referendum was certainly not ruled out. We held numerous discussions on the issue at the time. If I remember correctly, the report's points of contention and the issue of open lists were definitely discussed.

I would like to conclude with gender equality. Our report stated that what was being done was clearly insufficient. We recommend that all parties be required to explain in Parliament what they are and aren't doing to recruit women. When it comes to that, we absolutely agree that it's not enough to change the voting system, but it's something to consider.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Both in Quebec City and in Ottawa, when changes are made to the election laws, parliamentary tradition requires that an advisory committee be struck and be chaired by the chief electoral officer. The committee would operate by consensus. When a party breaks that tradition, it must expect the favour to be returned in a negative sense if it loses power. That is why the committee is consensus-based. In Quebec, prior to 1999, voters were not required to identify themselves. The court recognized that there were identity theft systems in place in 1995 and 1998, and that goes back the the majority Mr. Boulerice was talking about.

So if there is talk about changing the democratic rules of a society and there is a desire for plurality, for Canadians to embrace democracy, for people to be able to assess the advantages and disadvantages if no system is perfect, why is that being taken away from them? Some experts and individuals who belong to the elites say that it's very complicated and that, since there is a mandate of

representative democracy, we should go ahead with this and the others will follow. I feel that it would be akin to Plato's the *Republic*. Philosophers would be in power. I am a philosopher, but that's not what democracy is.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: The idea was that the issue could be studied. It has to be possible to make distinctions. That was the point of the report.

● (1900)

Mr. Christian Dufour: Personally, I think that raises very different visions of politics, life, and society. Clearly, our current voting system is not perfect. That said, in Quebec, a few unfortunate cases were mentioned in which the party with the most votes was not the one that won the election. I think that could happen in Quebec again because the work relating to electoral districts was not done properly.

For our system to work, it must be possible to regularly review electoral boundaries and to adjust them to the population. We cannot simply say, however, that the current system is no good and that's it. That is a great exaggeration. A referendum would allow Canadians to choose. We know what the current system is. Through the committees' work and expert testimony, we have identified one or two systems. So we must not offer five systems because people have other things on their minds than these issues. There must be a debate on the subject.

After the Brexit vote, referendums are not popular. I would point out though that, in New Zealand, a country that is repeatedly mentioned, referendums have been a fundamental part of the process. They have had four referendums.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Ms. May now.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): As we talk about women's engagement, I know that the women parliamentarians around this table also noted that Professor Des Rosiers, you're only the third woman witness we've heard from—and the first was the minister. Maryantonett Flumian was also very strong.

I know that gender studies isn't your area. Law reform is your area and the study of law, but I struggle with looking at the strong correlations that we've seen—and Professor Lijphart just showed them to us again. Consensus-based proportional representation systems have higher levels of participation by women in parliaments around the world. I want to ask you if you've ever considered whether increased participation by women is more than a result of parties putting more women on lists, but the result of a change in culture that happens when we don't have winner-take-all wedge issues in trying to get the other guy, that when we change to a consensus system it will attract more women because it's less vicious.

Is that something we've ever seen work done on? Is that intuitive or of value?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: When we were doing this report, we had several conferences on women's issues and "how come women aren't elected", and the range of issues that were identified included the nature of politics, the lack of access to finances, and having to displace a guy in the nomination. The NMP, or the idea of the list, was a way of reaching out to people in a different way and expanding

[*Translation*]

the political class.

[*English*]

It was a way of expanding the number of people who would access political life, get experience, get visibility, and so on. That's the first part.

The second part—and I agree, because that was one of the comments I received that you'll see in my paper—is that the 19th century vision of strong leadership is to say, "Get it done, get elected, get it done", as opposed to consensus building. There was a sense in which the nature...and I'm not sure that it's only gender studies that note this. I'm just saying that there is a way in which the vision of what good governance means in the 21st century may not be the same as it was in the 19th century in a colonial power that said, "Okay, we're here to get things done." You may want to say it's better to delay a little and speak to more people before you move forward.

The other aspect of the 19th century vision that's embedded in first past the post is the idea that your identity is solely based on where you are. You only have one identity, and you vote in that riding. I am solely defined as an elector from Ottawa East, as opposed to the ability that's created in an MMP system where you can express yourself in two ways, both as to who is the best person to represent Ottawa East, but also with which party I want. That seemed to reflect the more complex way in which people defined identities. People move more than they moved in the 19th century and have a broader range of issues, and so on.

I'm talking about the way in which people explained it to us. In the consultation, when people were playing with this, why were they expressing a preference for that system?

● (1905)

Ms. Elizabeth May: In the time I have left I also want to ask Professor Jansen about the period when Alberta experimented with two mixed systems. Looking back at this, you find that the United Farmers of Alberta brought in, with no referendum apparently, a system in 1926 that lasted until 1955. Do you think this was connected to the Irish adoption of a single transferrable vote in 1921? This seems to be a fertile period for people looking at STV.

Prof. Harold Jansen: If you go back and read the *Grain Growers' Guide* between 1911 and 1921, there would be articles on how to improve your crop production followed by detailed articles about the single transferrable vote. The interest of the Canadian prairies predated even Ireland's adoption of STV. Ideas about these issues were floating around. There was a fertile current. It's quite remarkable to flip through the range of issues. I was finding that as UFA members, they were big proponents of referendums and

direct democracy, but they didn't use that to bring in the electoral system change, which is quite interesting.

The Chair: Thank you. That historical perspective in Canada is very interesting.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): One of the bits of advice we've had before we start getting into solutions is to look at values. Over the last three weeks I've been home, and I've been talking to my constituents about values. I was pleased to see, and Professor Des Rosiers' piece mentioned values, that there are a couple of comments here about how no system can perfectly address all values that a society may want to see addressed. I'm hearing a wide range of values, and as we embark on this, the Law Commission did some great work.

In 2016 the question I throw out to all three of you is what values do we try to capture? What do we build on? In the brief we have, I see there are 13 qualities that could all be seen as values. How do we build a system that meets this wide range of values?

I'll ask the three of you, what are your own top three values that you've either heard of or researched, or could bring to the table that would be the top values we should be looking for in the design of an alternative to what we have?

I don't know who wants to go first, but I throw that out there because there's some great material here. Where do we start when we look at values?

Professor Dufour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Dufour: Each system has its pros and cons, I would say. The danger is that we could at some point have the worst of both worlds, losing the strengths of our current system without gaining the benefits of a new system. We have to be careful of that.

In answer to your question, I would say that governance is a very important value. Much is said about representation here, but the point is to elect a government, and it must have the means to govern. In the turmoil of globalization, having a strong and stable government is an important value.

The other value, as I said, is being able to change governments at regular intervals. We know what happens when someone is in power for a long time.

Representation is the third value. Canada's changing population must be represented.

That said, there could be a very post-modern trend. Societies today are increasingly individualistic and fragmented, and people have opinions they want to express. We must not be overly influenced by this though because it could weaken our system. That is why I defend the State. The State and government are much criticized and maligned, but the average citizen does not really understand what the State and government are. They are forces of order and stability in the turmoil of globalization. This is an important value.

Modernizing the system is one thing, but I'm put off by the complacency I see. People say we are very post-modern, that things have changed, and that people have to express their views. The point though is electing a government. At the risk of sounding partisan, I would say that Canadians seem happy to have a Liberal majority government that can take action. How long will that last? I can't say.

A stable government that can govern, that can be voted out eventually and that represents what Canadians think reasonably well although not perfectly, that is what is important to me. Nothing is perfect of course, but there are also drawbacks with proportional representation. The difference is that we don't know what they are yet because we have never tested them.

● (1910)

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: My three would probably be fairness, representation, and participation.

I would like Parliament to look like how people actually voted, so there's that basic element of fairness. I say that as somebody who lives in southern Alberta, where it's a foregone conclusion. I can pretty much tell you, even before the votes have been cast, how it's going to turn out. There are a lot of people who don't see their votes reflected at all.

Representation and how it occurs is a complex topic to me. We need to see representation as more than just binary, with you as an MP representing your constituents. It occurs in a broader institutional context where representatives are accountable to the people they represent. Most of the time they're going to do what they want, but not always. When they don't, they're going to provide a good explanation and account for that. To give the professor a footnote, Hanna Pitkin wrote the definitive work on representation, and that was her definition.

With participation, I'd like to see Canadians engage, participate, and feel a sense of connection with their electoral process.

We saw an increase in voter turnout, but I'm concerned by the declines I see in political interest and the levels of political knowledge. That's the thing that worries me about a referendum. There was a survey done by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. It's old now, about 20 years old. A majority of Canadians think you need a majority to win the seat. Canadians don't understand the status quo.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Reid now.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): My questions are for Professor Jansen.

I want to start by saying that I am no particular great fan of the first past the post system. In fact, I am the author of a motion adopted in the last Parliament to change the way we elect our Speaker from a first past the post system. It's actually a process in which you drop people off the ballot one at a time to a preferential ballot.

Having said that, first past the post is not the best of systems I can imagine, but it's also not the worst. I would define the worst system as that which has a predicable outcome in terms of which parties are winners or losers, that effectively allows—albeit not in every election into the future—the next election to be predictably affected,

at least in part to be rigged, by choosing a particular system. I don't think that that particular sin can be laid at the feet of any STV model or of MMP, but I do think that the alternative vote system, single-member preferential votes, may have that problem.

I'm turning to a paper that you co-authored with Peter McCormick that was published on November 30 of last year in which you point out something that others have pointed to as well, that had the 2015 election been conducted using the alternative vote and everybody had voted the same way they actually voted, with the same preferences and the same second preferences, the Liberals would have gone from winning 184 seats to winning 205 seats. Interestingly, in the 2011 election, in which we know the Liberals got less than half the votes under the current system than they did in 2015, the Liberals also would have benefited.

I don't know if you've done any further research into prior elections—2008 and 2006—to see whether it is a consistent pattern or not. Let me ask that question as a starting point.

Prof. Harold Jansen: There was a paper done and published in 2002 by Antoine Bilodeau, who looked at, I believe, the 1997 federal election and found that the Liberals would have benefited. I'm going to now rain all over the work that Professor McCormick and I did. The danger whenever you're projecting backwards is that we're using how people voted and assuming that they would have voted the same way had the alternative vote been in place. For example, in southern Alberta where I live, in the constituency of Lethbridge, it has been Conservative. It was Canadian Alliance, Reform, as far back as anyone can remember. So Liberals, New Democrats, and Green Party supporters have to face some choices about, would you vote.... That's the problem. If I look at how people say they're going to vote in a survey, I'm trying to project what's going to happen.

The hope with the alternative vote and the reason I think the Liberals would seem to do well under it—and there have been other people who have done similar kinds of analyses—is that they are a lot of other parties' second choices. That's the key. The hope, the argument that's been made in favour of the alternative vote, is that it's going to encourage parties to reach out to supporters of other parties and say, "Okay, I understand you're supporting them, but here's what we have common", to try to seek commonality rather than to polarize.

The evidence that I have seen is that in Alberta and Manitoba, that didn't really happen. I spent countless weeks digging through archives looking at campaign material. I found one campaign thing where somebody was explicitly appealing for second choices. You just didn't see a lot of evidence of that.

● (1915)

Mr. Scott Reid: If you don't mind my asking, having lived in Australia myself, I noticed that at the poll you are handed typically—

Prof. Harold Jansen: A how-to-vote card.

Mr. Scott Reid: A how-to-vote card. That's right. If you're Labor, it states that you should make sure that your second choice is... whatever.

Is the distinction in Alberta and Manitoba versus Australia historically the fact that there's mandatory marking of all candidates in Australia, or else your ballot there will be tossed aside?

Prof. Harold Jansen: What has tended to happen is that there's coalition between the Liberal and National parties. In places where they have been strong, they wanted to bring in compulsory preferences to maximize that preference exchange. For example, there was an incident in the spring in Queensland where there was debate over reapportionment of the legislative seats, and then the Labor Party brought in an amendment to bring in compulsory preferences, because they had been bleeding votes to the Green Party and others and wanted to make sure they'd recapture those votes. Parties that think they're losing try to maximize that.

Australia also has really complicated deals, because the senate uses STV, where the larger parties will make a deal with the small parties to make sure that on their how-to-vote cards, they put them as second choice, and in exchange they'll tell their supporters to indicate the small parties on the senate ballot. There's a very complicated system of deal-making that goes on between the two houses. The compulsory preferences are a very big part of what makes that work.

The Chair: Ms. Sahota, please.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): It's fascinating. I don't think we've heard that perspective before. You've just opened my eyes. You're right, it's very hard to look back at previous elections, because we've been told, well, had this last election happened with the AV model, this would have happened. But so many other people may not have felt coerced into voting for one party over another because maybe they're not strategically voting in that case.

Do you think that an AV model would always favour the Liberal Party, or under certain circumstances in other places that have used it, does one party tend to always win?

Prof. Harold Jansen: The problem is that we don't have a lot of cases. We really just have Australia. That's why I was bringing in Alberta and Manitoba. It provides a useful other set of cases that give us some other evidence. I don't think there's anything that would preclude other parties from doing well.

The thing that I think we have to remember is that the other parties would adjust their behaviour in response to the system. My observation is that the Conservatives very much tried to polarize themselves against the Liberals, NDP, and Green Party. That's not a very good strategy under an AV system. You want to reach out for second preferences. Would they have campaigned that way? Would they have structured the government that way over the last...? I suspect not, if the incentives were a little bit different. It's very, very hard to predict. This is based on how they behaved this way, so, if you look at the polling data, there weren't a lot of party second preferences. That was a deliberate strategy they took. They might have behaved differently.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Perhaps we wouldn't have as many polarizing issues if we tried to find consensus-type politics.

Prof. Harold Jansen: That's the hope, but as I said, I didn't see a lot of evidence of that. The closest we got to a preference exchange is in Alberta. Most of those cases happened in 1955. There was a scandal about Social Credit, and the CCF, and Liberals suddenly figured out after 30 years, "You know, if we exchange preferences, we can defeat them", so they defeated four Social Credit candidates through an exchange of preferences. In 1956, Social Credit brought the legislature back and banned preferential voting.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Once a system is in place, people figure out very quickly how to work within that system. My little bit of exposure to it was in my nomination. I didn't really know what system I was going into, but we quickly learned how the nomination happens. They do it this way, and then you quickly think about it, and there was a lot of talking to each other. The different candidates were trying to come up with common ground, and even help each other at times if they thought it was to their benefit.

Anyway, moving on from that, the only thing that troubles me is this. I just had a town hall yesterday on this issue, and somebody got up and talked about how he felt—it was kind of off-topic a bit—that MPs should also be required to live in their riding. They should live in their boundary, because if they lived in their boundary, people would maybe even have stronger connections to their MP. I often hear this kind of stuff from people; they want to have this connection. I know that some experts say there's a connection through the party somehow, but by having these lists through MMP, I truly feel that we will create two classes of MPs, one that's responsible to the party, and one that's responsible to their constituents.

Right now, with the system we have, I think, as an MP, you feel this balance that you have to create between party and constituents and to try to come up with what's best for both. They elected you under a platform, yet the constituents also voted for you, so you are answerable to them. What system do you think still keep that accountability in place?

● (1920)

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: This was actually a big issue in the report. I think that different parties would have different rules, but it was quite possible—and as is the case in Scotland and in New Zealand, they divide the work for different constituencies. The list MPs are not sitting out there doing different things; they are sharing the work, offering different services, and so on. Among parties, they developed rules to do that. The electorate would see that, in the sense that if your MP is not there, then you can go to the list MP and so on. So there were lots of things. It was interesting, but this didn't seem to be an issue.

Here I'll just briefly mention the three values that came up when we were doing our work. First, voting counts. I think the three values were fairness, the translation of the votes. By fairness, people mean that if I vote for this, I want my vote to count, I want votes to be reflected in the elections. Stability was another value.

[*Translation*]

Representation,

[*English*]

I have to say, did come. We are no longer a society that tolerates inequality. The reason that we have

[*Translation*]

universal suffrage is

[*English*]

that everybody should have the right not only to...but to also be elected. Those are the values.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Dubé now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In both the questions and the testimony, I have heard statements that are a bit worrisome. As my colleague said, we are talking about working within the system, looking for an outcome, and so on. In my opinion, our work here, as we heard earlier, should allow us to make a sound choice that represents our values rather than looking for an outcome or working within the constraints of a system.

Mr. Dufour, I would like to go back to your reference to voting out a government. On the contrary, I think our electoral system should allow us to not vote out but rather to engage a government or an MP. In both the questions and testimony, we heard that we have had the same system for 150 years. Things have changed a lot in that time.

I am thinking of the way a student on a university campus in another province interacts with people from his riding in 2016. That has changed a lot since the 1970s or 1980s.

Moreover, when canvassing, we sometimes hear that people appreciate our work at the local level or what a certain leader or party is doing. I have no doubt that my Liberal colleagues had the same experience during the campaign, and that my Conservative colleagues heard the same thing. Yet much is said about the public's understanding of the system.

In my opinion, the public wants all of that. They want to elect a prime minister. They also want a party and a good local representative. I have trouble imagining what kind of system could do this better than mixed-member proportional representation. This system includes a local representative, a representative of a political party, and through the party, a prime minister. In my opinion, that is the challenge.

It is often said that the public does not understand the political system but I think it is more a question of aspirations than ignorance.

How can we bring these aspirations into line with the new and changing reality of social and other media, and align the work of a local MP or of a prime minister, who represents everyone, with a party that has a national platform?

I would like to hear from all three of you on this. I might interrupt you though with other questions. I apologize in advance.

● (1925)

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: We had recommended mixed-member proportional representation because we had reached the same conclusion. We found that this system allows for a link at the local level, which a lot of people want. It also allows for these new forms of political participation. The prime minister, the party, and the local representative are the reason people vote. They don't really know what to choose. So this system reflects that ambiguity to some extent.

We were initially struck by the fact that new democracies never chose a first past the post system, due to these distortions. It is true that this system has been used for a long time, but is there no place for changes in the thinking and knowledge about democracy? Determining whether that was possible was our key mandate. The system we recommended was meant to address this to some extent.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Over to you, Mr. Jansen.

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: There's a book on mixed member proportional systems called *The Best of Both Worlds?*. What the authors found is that basically there were some countries with PR systems who wanted that element of local representation and had moved in the direction of MMP. New Zealand is probably the textbook case of this. It came from a very similar system to ours, but wanted that element of proportionality. Of the options out there, it probably is the best at melding those together.

On the broader question about social media and how that fits in, I have a whole other pile of research I can show you, which would take more than five minutes.

The Chair: It would be very interesting. It's just that it would take —

The Chair: Mr. Dufour, we have to go to Mr. Richards.

[*Translation*]

You will, however, have the opportunity to speak again when you answer Mr. Richards or another MP.

[*English*]

Go ahead.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Professor Jansen, first of all, as a fellow Albertan, welcome. I have a few questions for you.

Your research that you summarized in your opening remarks, and have referred to, focuses on western Canada, which made it interesting to me in particular as a fellow westerner. You did talk about the changes that were made to revert to the previous system, but I didn't get a sense in the research, which you had gone through in doing your paper, of the rationale or the reasons why the changes were made.

Could you give me a better sense as to why those changes were made, first of all, and then whether those changes to those different systems helped to solve whatever problems they were seeking to solve? In particular, with the idea of reducing the spread between popular support for a party and the number of seats it wins, did the changes have any affect on that?

I think you did touch already on the idea of turnout levels. You said it didn't seem to have any impact on turnout levels, but the ballots would be slightly more complicated, at least in that scenario. Did the number of rejected ballots or spoiled ballots increase? Could you give me a sense of that in the broad question I just asked you?

● (1930)

Prof. Harold Jansen: The lead-up to this was that in the decade of 1910 to 1920, there were big discussions on the Prairies on this. A lot of the complaints they were having about their electoral system were exactly the kinds of things you've been hearing here and we've been talking about today, around the lack of fairness in terms of representation. The single transferable vote was seen as the British form of PR, so it had a particular popularity, but there was this a populist element to western Canada. The idea that it was candidate focused was attractive.

When the liberal progressives came in—actually the Liberal Party in Manitoba brought it in in 1920—they were facing farmers suddenly becoming active, and they figured that if they gave them this one demand, then that would help. So they brought it in to Winnipeg. The other thing in Winnipeg was that there had been the general strike. It also helped, they thought, to contain some of the labour radicalism a bit because the labour parties might have absolutely swept Winnipeg.

In 1922 the United Farmers of Manitoba came in, and they extended AV to the rural areas, which was a bit of a betrayal because everybody had argued about STV. This helped to preserve their power base, and it was a blend of idealism and political self-interest. It was the same with the United Farmers of Alberta. They brought in STV in Edmonton and Calgary. They lifted whole parts of the legislation from Manitoba and just copied it in Alberta. It was the same thing. UFA was strong in the rural areas and weak in the urban areas. This fragmented their opposition, but they were partly keeping their promise. Everybody saw that eventually this would get better and that it would switch. This was a stepping stone to STV everywhere, and it never happened.

The big concern was over the size of the districts. At that time, where you're travelling by horse and buggy to places, that's a big concern. You can't use Skype.

The reason it ended was slightly different in each province. In Alberta it was strict political self-interest for the Social Credit. They were starting to lose. The Liberals and CCF finally figured out that they could use this to defeat Social Credit.

Manitoba is a little more complicated. In Manitoba, the big issue was about the rural overrepresentation. There was a bit of a trade-off. If they solved this problem and started to bring in independent boundary commissions, then they would get rid of this. They had another big complaint, and this is a very important one, because I've seen people come before you and suggest that we should adopt this model. If you do AV in the rural areas and STV in the cities, the

problem is that going from 30% to 40% in a group of 10 single-member districts is going to pay off big time in seats. Going from 30% to 40% in Winnipeg, which had 10 districts, is going to get you one more seat.

Where did parties spend their efforts and focus their attention? In the rural areas. Winnipeg complained they were being ignored.

My time is up.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. Blake Richards: There will probably be another round.

The Chair: Mr. DeCourcey.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you, Professor Jansen, for addressing the question about not necessarily being able to onlay past results onto future elections. I think it's tied into the whole commentary that I've heard many times, which is that the electoral system is situated within a larger system of governments' larger political culture, with political actors who necessarily adapt and change the situations.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Des Rosiers, I would like to ask you about the Commission's analysis of the issue of constitutionality and the guaranteed seats in the Maritimes.

I don't think that is necessarily impossible. Moving to proportional representation in a province such as Prince Edward Island would be somewhat of a challenge. There are four guaranteed seats, while New Brunswick has ten. Local representation is very important there. How was this analyzed? What kind of questions were you asked in your work?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Our mandate was to see if it was possible. After evaluating various systems and determining that mixed-member proportional representation was a potential solution with respect to values and rebalancing, we had to determine whether it could be used in Canada. Our conclusion was that it is possible to use it by creating lists. It would also be possible to add an extra seat. The only question was how many additional seats would be needed. That was another matter. Should additional seats be created or should the decision be that there would be no benefit to having additional seats and that seats should instead be distributed differently?

In a sense, we tried to find a solution with the minimum additional seats possible.

● (1935)

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: What do you mean by the minimum additional seats possible?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: It means that our suggestion was to increase

[*English*]

the size of some of the geographical ridings to allow for the list MPs. An alternative was simply to add a number of list MPs; and in P.E.I. that would be the obvious solution there.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Do you think Canadians would have an appetite for more parliamentary seats?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: You already had an increase in the number of MPs, in any event, so I think it has to be justifiable. You can discuss whatever you want and decide, but it would seem to me that this could be done in a way that's completely neutral and a little like electoral boundaries, that is, in a way that diminishes and looks at what makes sense with the numbers.

I think there is pressure from the public to move in that direction, because there are lots of studies that show that the way in which it is done can cause distortions.

[*Translation*]

Which electoral districts have a lot of minorities? There is a way of approaching this. We have to determine what the broad principles are and what we want. If more MPs are needed to comply with the Constitution, adding another MP is not something earth-shattering.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Mr. Dufour, you said your preference is the current system. Do you see any opportunity to improve the system? Do you think any changes should be considered?

Mr. Christian Dufour: Yes.

I am not completely opposed to change. I am simply cautious. One of the values of our electoral system is its simplicity. The system should not be too complicated.

One of the strengths of our current system is the nearly physical relationship between MPs and their constituents. That is very valuable. I am sorry for repeating this, but I am the only one making this point. Our world is becoming increasingly virtual and conceptual and people are already frustrated. An MP represents a constituency, buildings, a certain territory. Listening to the debate, I am struck by two visions. Since Greek antiquity, politics has been a battle, I would say. I tell my political science students that the law of the jungle applies. One of the great strengths of our system is the official opposition. In the past, the opposition was people you wanted to destroy.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Now they have status, but there is still an element of battle. Proportional systems focus on cooperation and consensus. Personally, I do not really believe in that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Christian Dufour: I also think that the old democracies are superior to the new ones. I have no doubt of that. The visions are different ...

The Chair: Mr. Dufour, I don't want to have a fight with you, but ...

Mr. Christian Dufour: That is what I am saying, that they are two different visions and it is important for Canadians to be able to choose between the two.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Now to the second round of questions.

Ms. Romanado, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My next question pertains to voter participation rates. Professor Jansen also provided some figures about online voting.

Professor Dufour, you mentioned voting age and mandatory voting, but did not provide further details. Could you elaborate on these two aspects please?

●(1940)

Mr. Christian Dufour: Thank you.

Personally, I think mandatory voting is disrespectful of citizens. It infantilises them. I think citizens have the right not to vote. They do not have to be perfect model citizens.

Moreover, I think the current system offers an accurate picture of the situation. It might be depressing or negative, but at least we know how many people do not vote. Mandatory voting, apart from the fact that it is very difficult to enforce—we're not going to throw people in jail for not voting—can give an artificially positive picture of the situation.

In short, I am not in favour of mandatory voting. It seems desperate to me, forcing people to vote makes me angry. It would be unfair to citizens. To my mind, citizens are king. They can decide to vote or not. MPs will decide, but I don't think we should force citizens to vote.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay.

You mentioned voting age.

Mr. Christian Dufour: I asked people I know who have children and I am not convinced that 16-year-olds have the maturity to vote. Once again, it is a trend. I have heard that 16-year-olds would vote more than 18-year-olds. I am concerned about a vision of democracy where quantity is more important than quality. We need evidence to back this up.

In my opinion, a 16-year-old is not mature enough to vote. It is very telling, however, that people wonder why the voting age should not be 16.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

Professor Jansen, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: On the voting age, I think if we started imposing tests on maturity and knowledge, there are a lot of 18-year-olds and 25-year-olds and 40-year-olds and 50-year-olds who wouldn't qualify either. I remember as a kid being very frustrated with adults I would meet who knew way less than I did and followed politics far less than I did. To me, I think the idea of voting age has to be tied to rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and at 18, in particular, you start paying taxes. That's a pretty obligation that kicks in. Then there's the idea of no taxation without representation. There's something to that, right? To me I think it needs to be tied to those responsibilities. A city councillor in Lethbridge actually brought forward a motion to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to lower the voting age to 16 at the municipal level, because that actually isn't an issue at the municipal level. Because we have property tax, it's a different issue at the municipal level.

As far as compulsory voting is concerned, I'm certainly not as strongly opposed to it as Professor Dufour is. I would be opposed to actually making people vote; but as for making people show up at the polls, I'm at least somewhat receptive to that idea. I think the idea of actually forcing them to put an X beside somebody's name and thereby maybe contributing to the election of somebody they oppose is, under no circumstances, acceptable.

Fixing low voter turnout is incredibly complicated. The causes are generational. They are based on short-term factors. There are so many things. It's the magic bullet solution. As for fixing it any other way, I'm at a loss. I've spent a lot of time looking at the research and teaching on this. There isn't a magic bullet solution other than mandatory voting.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Do I still have some time left?

The Chair: Yes, but it would be a quick question with quick answers.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: We talked quickly about online voting, and you had talked about the statistics and the fact that it wasn't statistically sound because the people who participated were online. Do you have any other research that you could provide to the committee?

Prof. Harold Jansen: We did a phone survey, and I checked it. We've been looking at other parts of this data, and right away, we wondered if we had asked about this in the phone survey. Sadly we did not. We deliberately did a phone survey because we wanted to get people who weren't necessarily online.

The proportion of people who would not consider themselves really big Internet users is around 15% to 16%. If you discounted the results by that 15% to 16% who are completely uninterested because they're basically just not engaged online, it would round the number down. Probably around 45%-46% said they'd be very likely to vote online. But again, remember we have this other problem, so we've got two problems. We have the problem that we're doing it online, and it overrepresents the politically interested.

● (1945)

The Chair: Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

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

I have two brief points.

Mr. Dufour, you spoke earlier of the very close relationship MPs can have with their constituents. You are absolutely right about that. We have all spoken to that during the 14 meetings we have had. Each one of us has mentioned how attached we can be to our constituents and how attached they can be to their MP, regardless of the party or the location in Canada.

Ms. Des Rosiers, you mentioned earlier the possibility of voting for the party and for the MP, but there is a third variable, voting for the prime minister. On a ballot, how can a person vote for a leader, for a platform, and for an MP? That is getting complicated, not to mention, as I said earlier, that our current system isn't perfect. Find us a perfect system and we will adopt it. I don't think there is one.

Would you like to respond, Ms. Des Rosiers?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes.

The system we recommended had just two votes, not three. We aimed for something similar to our current system, while solving the distortion problems. During our consultations, people said there were inflated majorities, or minorities that were not represented. We tried to address that. The report focused on how to correct certain excesses of the system.

We recognize that political parties still play a central role. We can punish them in a mixed-member proportional representation system by not voting for them. They can be punished for choosing the wrong leader and for not putting the right people on their lists. They can be punished to some extent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That is why I say it is very difficult. It is opening the door to better representation of what citizens want from their MP, from the government, and from the prime minister. So there are three variables. How many people say they support a certain party but do not like the leader, or prefer someone else from another party? What do you do about that? There is no perfect system.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: We tried to answer questions raised during the consultations and to address the desire for something a bit more sophisticated. It was presented with that in mind.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I think Mr. Dufour has something to add. I don't want to rush him.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Considering the way citizens are and what society has become in 2016, I think they have very high and fundamentally contradictory expectations. I don't think there is a system that can fulfill all those expectations. There are frustrations with the system, but I don't think adopting even a moderate proportional representation system would solve voter disillusion-ment. It goes deeper than that.

Your committee has a huge job. You have to come up with a reform plan. It is not easy because it is technical and you have to weigh the pros and the cons. I wish you good luck. I would like to be convinced, but there is still a burden of proof. The burden of proof must be established. I will say it again, and I know you don't want to hear this, but the experts are all opposed to the current voting system and I find that unfair.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Jansen, by leaving it up to the politicians, to us, to decide how to change the system, do you not fear that our partisan interests will override the interests of the general public?

Like it or not, choosing a voting system puts us in a conflict of interest.

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: Absolutely. And I don't say that to cast aspersions on any of you, but your motives, even if you support something for principled reasons but it happens to be in the interests of your party—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Can we use a referendum to call the shot?

Prof. Harold Jansen: My issue with a referendum, again, is people not having done the homework on voting on this. The model that I like—and I that know Professor Carty was here and talked about it—is a citizens' assembly. I like the idea of having an educational process where citizens learn and make the trade-offs.

A referendum is like a survey—

● (1950)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We need time for that we need time—a lot of time.

Prof. Harold Jansen: I absolutely agree with you.

The Chair: Thank you, but we have to move on to Mr. Boulerice now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boulerice, you have five minutes.

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

I will say first of all that I agree with two things that Mr. Dufour said. I will then have a question for Mr. Jansen.

Perhaps that surprises you a bit.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Yes, a bit.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I completely agree with you on mandatory voting. I think people are free to stay home. People can even sleep in if they want to. In my opinion, our role is not to force anyone to vote.

I also agree that we are talking about two visions. They are both legitimate, but completely different. One view is that an election serves to choose a strong and stable government, even if it results in a false majority. The other view is that an election serves to reflect the will of the people in their diversity and plurality, even if it forces the parties to talk and agree among themselves. These are two visions based on two different value scales.

Mr. Jansen, we can consider the percentage of votes and the percentage of seats that a party has won, but we can also look at the average number of votes it took to elect each MP representing each party. To elect each Liberal MP in the last election, it took an average of just over 37,000 votes. To elect each Conservative MP, it took 48,000. It took 78,000 votes to elect each NDP MP, and 602,000 votes to elect a Green Party MP.

You mentioned Manitoba and Alberta and the use of this voting system. If alternative voting is not a solution to ensure diversity of voices, what should we do to eliminate such distortions, which results in citizens' votes not being equal or being wasted in some cases?

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: The only solution for that is some form of proportional representation, STV, a mixed-member, a list system. You can't divide a single member seat up proportionally between parties; that's the fundamental issue. The only way of dealing with that is compensatory seats through a mixed-member system, or multi-member districts where you elect more than one person.

I will note there was this really oddball article that suggested proportional tenure, so that if where the Liberals, say, got 40% of the vote, they'd hold the seat for 40% of the term.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Prof. Harold Jansen: It never went anywhere, but—

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I'm not sure about that one.

Prof. Harold Jansen: I'm not recommending that, but that's somebody really thinking outside the box. But no, that fundamental issue of, basically, wasted votes, only a proportional system can fix that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: We heard this morning from Professor Lijphart, who made some interesting remarks. There are many experiences that show the impact of proportional voting on the behaviour of voters and of parties alike. This has been observed in Germany for decades, but the most recent example is New Zealand. Professor Lijphart noted that there has been a change in political culture since the first election, during which elements of proportional representation were introduced. Rather than imposing its views, a party tends to look for partners.

People on the street often say they want political parties to work together to find solutions. In their opinion, that can sometimes result in better public policy, precisely because everyone participates in the discussion.

What do you think of that?

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: Professor Lijphart published a very influential paper in which he looked at policy outcomes. He found basically no difference. They get at things differently, but it's not as if the economy performs better. So the strong majority government doesn't necessarily give you better public policy. G. Bingham Powell wrote a book in which he actually found that countries that elected representatives under PR tended to hew to what the median voter wanted. The median voter has a special place in democratic theory. With the median voter, where half of the voters are on one side and half the voters on the other, that position should win any majority vote. He found that the policies put out by PR governments tended to hew better to that than any other system. I will note, though, that he did find that there was one exception under first past the post systems, and that was Canada, actually did surprisingly well under first past the post. But that, I would argue, has to do with the sad situation we have, in which the Liberal Party has tended to be dominant historically and has been in the centre. That's a weird, freaky Canadian thing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much. Sorry, I missed that last part.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Prof. Harold Jansen: The Liberal Party, a weird, freaky Canadian thing—

● (1955)

The Chair: I was speaking to the analyst.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor, Mr. Ste-Marie.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): I have a brief question for Ms. Des Rosiers.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure having you here and listening to you.

Ms. Des Rosiers, I would like to go back to your exchange with Mr. DeCourcey regarding mixed-member proportional representation with a system of lists. You mentioned expanding the size of ridings or increasing the number of elected representatives. There are currently 338 MPs who represent 100,000 people each, on average.

If you had to decide, would you increase the number of people each MP represents to 130,000 or 150,000, or would you increase the number of MPs in Canada to 450 or 500?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: We tried to avoid increasing the number of MPs, except in the case of constitutional issues and to address specific issues.

I think that is the right approach: it is not strictly one way or the other. We need to find a solution between the two.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I would say that 100,000 people is already a huge number. It would be very difficult to represent 150,000 citizens.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Different models can be evaluated. There is a range between 100,000 and 150,000, and we have to know how far you want to go. We did not go into the details of determining various combinations. We had to determine whether it could be done in Canada.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

I will let my colleague have the floor.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Thank you.

One of the pitfalls of reform in Quebec was thinking that the number of ridings could be mathematically and automatically reduced from 125 to 75, despite the fact that Quebec MPs offer many local services in their ridings. People said it didn't make sense, that it was already difficult for them to access their MP. The issue is not so much the individual but rather the role.

We talked about accountability, simplicity and equity. We referred to the drawbacks, but didn't discuss them much. You are right, Mr. Dufour, in saying that the devil is in the details, and we saw that in Quebec. There were 26 regions, which favoured three major parties, and ideological pluralism was impossible. So there is a big challenge.

With respect to governance, under mixed-member proportional representation, do accountability and party lines still play a role? Would an MP on a list who is chosen by the party establishment say no and decide to vote according to the platform, or would they be expected to follow the party line?

I imagine that coalition governments become increasingly centrist over time if people want to take power and be those that people reach out to. Do election platforms lose their importance to some degree in that context?

What about citizens who are used to deciding who will take power? Apparatchiks will be the ones deciding who will form government. Is that not a political distortion? Should citizens not be informed and have a say in this? Personally, I think people should be able to make a decision about these drawbacks. That is why we need a referendum.

Mr. Christian Dufour: When I talk politics with my students, they often say the system appeals to them, but that the problem is the political parties. They argue that there should be no parties because they are appalled by their partisanship. I tell them that, unfortunately, life is not just harmony and happiness. There are also battles. I think this is a central point. Many people would essentially like to keep the current system with a few aspects of proportional representation. That seems to be the preference. Is that something that can be done? I'm not sure.

This is why I am stressing the two dynamics. Each type of voting system has its pros and cons. Can we keep the current system with a sprinkling of proportional representation? You will have to decide that. Can you come up with a credible system that wins Canadians over? Canadians do want changes, but they are attached to the current system. Once again, what strikes me in talking to my students is that they don't want political parties. People do not want to see battles. I say they are not being realistic. Politics is a battle. In any case, as MPs, you know that politics is a battle.

● (2000)

Mr. Luc Thériault: Thank you.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I would like to answer because this point was central to our discussions.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Are you talking about mandates?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes, exactly.

Parties still have to be accountable. They can be punished for putting the wrong people on the list. The report recognizes that transparency is essential. Parties should be judged on the way they choose who is on their list, just as parties are judged now, for instance, on the way they elect their leader or make choices for ridings. It is not really much different. Accountability and party responsibility are always expected.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you again to witnesses.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask Ms. Des Rosiers a question.

I would like to talk about the work of the Law Commission of Canada. As I recall, you started your work on electoral reform in 2001?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes, that's right.

Ms. Elizabeth May: You worked for three years before the Commission released the report. How many people were involved in this work and how many members of the public participated?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Above all, the Commission wanted to get started on this issue. We held consultations across Canada. We benefited from the fact that electoral reform was of great interest at that time. Many provincial organizations were holding consultations about it. In Quebec, a process was under way, as was the case in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. There was also some activity in British Columbia. We were fortunate in being able to consult with organizations that had already taken action in this regard.

A method of reforming the law requires citizen involvement in the discussions, addressing these issues and holding round tables with experts to see what the outstanding questions are.

Moreover, our goal was to see if we could

[*English*]

 commission more research to see whether we can get....

[*Translation*]

That is similar to the issue of minority representation. The evidence is not clear. Further work is needed. Our report indicates that it is not guaranteed, that we must continue looking at what the Lortie report said and not forget that the parties also have some responsibility.

The work proceeded as follows. The first stage was to determine what the consultation document would be. The second was to conduct the consultations based on this document. The consultation document was designed to focus on the values and the major issues. We wanted to know what bothered people, stability or accurate representation. Had we overlooked anything? Those were the kinds of things we considered.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: So when you're presenting and in your report after the 12 years that have passed since 2004 and the report of the Law Commission, the finding that you find the most solid is that the first past the post system is really not acceptable in a modern democracy. You're not really just speaking for yourself as an expert here, but from this whole process. Was that a strong finding of a lot of the people who were presenting? It was obviously the finding of the report itself.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Well, really, I have to say that I was a neophyte at that time. I'm a law practitioner, so I think the process of going and listening to the way in which people related to the electoral system at that time was convincing to me, and convincing to the commission. It didn't start with the position that this is where we're going to end up.

I'm quite certain on that basis that there was sufficient disconnection and a sufficient problem *sur la longue durée*—not that the system did not work well at times and reward them, but that in *la longue durée* there were too many issues that came up about the lack of adequate translation of votes to seat counts. That came up over and over again.

● (2005)

Ms. Elizabeth May: We were just talking with Professor Carty, and Professor Jansen was commenting on the benefit of citizens' assembles, but has there ever been a citizens' assembly that studied the issue of first past the post that hasn't concluded they'd rather replace it?

Prof. Harold Jansen: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Has there ever been any study in Canada by a law commission or a parliamentary committee that has said, let's look at the current system and keep it?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I think it's really hard to achieve that, because now we know that there are other systems that can actually respond better to....

The Chair: Okay.

We'll have to go to Mr. Aldag, but that's an interesting question and maybe it'll come up again.

Go ahead, Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: I wanted to go to Professor Des Rosiers. We had run out of time when you were commenting on my earlier point about the discussion of values. Is there anything further you wanted to add to that, or were you able to get out your comments?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Certainly, I think it concerns the translation of votes to seats and the fairness and the meaningfulness of this. That's why you vote: you want your vote to be translated into representation, and I think that was clear at that time. Certainly, people were concerned about stability, ensuring that the government was working, recognizing that the actors and the political culture in Canada would probably be sustainable, that we had actors that could work.

Finally, I think there was some concern, which I continue to share, that we have *le suffrage universel* and we want to have people who represent a little bit *le miroir de la population*. Representativeness in terms of the diversity of ideas, the diversity of voices, was important.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you. I just wanted to make sure that you were able to close out on that.

Professor Jansen, I also had the sense that you may have more to offer on your research and thoughts on online voting. I have a couple of minutes here. Would you like to take us into some more of your thoughts on online voting and the benefits, and perhaps pitfalls, that we should be looking at?

Prof. Harold Jansen: Well, there's a technical side of it—and I'm not a computer scientist and there are other people better qualified to talk about that.

The major issue is the lack of transparency in the process. Things disappear into cyberspace and nobody's entirely sure what happens and you can't recreate a paper trail the way you can with a paper ballot. That's a significant issue.

There's the issue of identity verification. Are the people casting the ballot actually the people who are supposed to cast it? How do you prevent ballots from being sold or those identities from being traded off? There are all kinds of issues around that, which I think are fairly significant technical challenges.

Mr. John Aldag: The gains, though, that could be made.... It's going to be about a balance, right?

Prof. Harold Jansen: Yes.

Mr. John Aldag: It's things like inclusiveness. If the technical aspects can be worked out, then at what point do we say, yes, we're at that tipping point where it's now worth going down this road? Are we anywhere close to reaching that point?

Prof. Harold Jansen: My sense is that technically we've got a way to go yet to have things that are safe and secure enough. As I said, I'd be quite adamant about the idea that this would just be a supplementary option, and not something that would replace in any way polling stations. Even if we think we could cut down the number of polling stations, I think that would be a huge mistake. I'm very concerned about people losing out on the opportunity to cast a ballot in person when they're not comfortable doing so online. I think there are some really significant issues around that. I think we need to be cautious on that front.

I also am suspicious of how great the gains would be in terms of voter turnout. I think most of the issues lie around motivation, not opportunity. I'm suspicious of a lot of things when people say on surveys, "Oh, I was too busy to vote". Often, it just means, "There are other things more important to me than voting." Okay, citizens can make those kinds of determinations. Voting is not that onerous, and I think Elections Canada has done a pretty good job in the last 20 years of improving the accessibility of the vote. There are more ways to vote than ever before.

I don't think we should expect realistically huge gains in voter turnout. I don't think that should be a motivation. It would be more convenient for some people, but these are people who would likely vote anyway. What I found was that the people most likely to say they were very likely to cast a vote in our survey were people who had already voted. They would just switch to doing it online.

● (2010)

The Chair: We're moving on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dufour, you have about 30 seconds to answer the question.

Mr. Christian Dufour: Aside from security and verification issues, a vote can very easily be devalued. When we vote now, we always have to go to a physical location. Some effort is required. It is not a survey.

I always give my students the following test. I tell them that a government is elected on October 1 with a huge majority, that there is a dramatic event three weeks later and the government's popularity plunges to 20% in the polls. I then ask them if the government should step down. My students say yes but I tell them no because a poll is not a vote. When people vote, they go somewhere physically and can't change their minds until the next election.

So there is always a risk. On one hand, there is a desire to make voting easier and to reach out to people, but I'm not sure how effective that would be. Isn't there a risk that the vote itself would be devalued?

The Chair: Thank you.

You have the floor, Mr. Reid.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: My questions are again directed to Professor Jansen. I'm drawing upon a couple of sources I've been reading. One is *When Citizens Decide: Lessons From Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform*, by an assortment of esteemed authors. The other is *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly.* I think they address to some degree the concern you had. I'm asking you to comment on the quotes that I'm going to give you about voters lacking the information in a referendum to be capable of casting a thoughtful and intelligent vote.

In the first of those two books, on page 132, the authors observe:

> Knowledge about the citizen assembly—the creator of the proposal they were now facing—contributed to voters' decisions. Knowing more about the assembly generated higher support for reform. But the impact of citizens' professed familiarity with the assembly varied in strength across the three referendums. The effect was strongest in the first referendum, British Columbia in 2005, and only half as strong in Ontario, and then negligible in British Columbia in 2009....

Of course, the citizens' assembly was several years old.

In the second book, on page 187, the authors say:

> Evidently, the CA shook up the usual processes of voter choice enough to put the result into majority territory. The very same proposal would have received weaker support if it had been hammered out in the bowels of the legislature by a sub-committee of the Legislative Assembly and presented to voters as a fait accompli.

Obviously, what they're pointing at—and this is emphasized in more detail in the books—is that the exercise in credibility of having a non-partisan body design a proposal led, in one case, to a fairly strong majority in favour of electoral reform.

I'm now asking you again about referendum. If we were to adopt some form of system—I don't know if this committee can do this—that demonstrates that an impartial and non-partisan process has produced the result that has been put before the voters, do you think there's a reasonable chance that a system could receive a majority mandate from the people or voters of Canada?

Prof. Harold Jansen: In that research they also found that people who knew a lot about the STV system the citizens' assembly had proposed—people who were very well informed about it—were more likely to vote in favour of it. People who were less informed about it were more likely to be swayed by the fact that it was a citizens' assembly, so it was the idea that, I didn't have time to do the homework—and STV is a fairly complicated system to learn, all the ins and outs of—but a bunch citizens, people who I trust...I trust the process. Absolutely, I think there is some evidence there that just the moral authority of the process can help produce support for it.

In this case, that was a very special and very time-consuming process, and whether that is as feasible on a national level, where I would argue things are more complicated than on a provincial level—

Mr. Scott Reid: Do you mean it's too complicated to carry out a citizens' assembly?

Prof. Harold Jansen: I'm thinking of how would you compose a citizens' assembly? In B.C. they had two people from each district, a man and a woman, and they had two aboriginal people to ensure that there was sufficient aboriginal representation. In Canada, how would you ensure...? Every province would need representation, and there are different parts of every province. We also want gender representation, and we want to make sure that aboriginal persons are represented. So there are a lot of layers to how you would structure this when I think of the complexity of doing this nationally. For example, B.C. doesn't really have to deal with the linguistic divide between French and English, which is a very significant fact of life here.

So the question of design, of how you would do that, is incredibly complicated, and I understand that you're under a little bit of time pressure here. But I do think that research does point to citizens' assemblies being able to produce buy-in among citizens, that these assembles are not just a bunch of people who have some sort of agenda, or people talking about complicated things that I don't want to learn about. It can produce buy-in, absolutely.

● (2015)

Mr. Scott Reid: Is there any time left, or is it all gone?

The Chair: There's about 35 seconds, so there's time for a statement.

Mr. Scott Reid: I'll just ask a question. The alternative, unfortunately, as far as I can see based on your testimony, is that the adoption of an STV/AV hybrid in Manitoba in 1921 was based on naked partisan self-interest, as was the adoption of that system in Alberta in 1921, as was the elimination of STV in Alberta in 1956, as was the adoption of STV in British Columbia in 1951. So we're left with one other example of the electoral system being changed historically. When the Social Credit got rid of STV in British Columbia, was it motivated by naked self-interest too, or was it actually motivated by an impartial desire to improve the political system?

The Chair: A very quick response to the point, please.

Prof. Harold Jansen: I would probably add another one to the naked partisan self-interest comment.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Ms. Sahota, please.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I'd like to start by clarifying something I said that I think was misconstrued a bit. When I said that actors learn to work within a system, what I meant is that we have a political system in place, and whatever other political system we move towards, it hopefully will be one of further co-operation, just like this committee is. Whether it's STV or MMP or whatever made-in-Canada solution we possibly come up with, we are hoping that it's one that will foster co-operation, just like we have to do on this committee. Letting go of our majority on this committee, I think, was a good move, and we have to figure out how to work within this committee to come up with a solution that's best for Canada.

What I'd like to know more about is making a system that is right for Canada. We've been discussing a lot systems that are popularly known in different countries, but we've also heard from experts that there are slight tweaks made to every single system in every country. So there's no STV model, no MMP model, no AV model—even though there's just the one example of that. Every country has a slightly different solution for its population and demographics.

There are a few proponents of MMP here. I know that my colleague asked this question referring just to the Maritimes at that point. Could you give me just a sample of what a ballot would ideally look like, what an election here would look like, and how you would draw up a district anywhere in this region? How do you see it working here?

Prof. Harold Jansen: Thinking on the spot about how I would quickly design an electoral system, I would go for an MMP system. I would have two ballots, where you vote for a local candidate and party. I would probably enlarge the size of the House of Commons. I realize that doing that would open up cheap political points for opponents of electoral reform. It absolutely would. Adding more politicians is never popular, but I think that's a cheap shot.

I'm going to give one other reason that's often overlooked. The U. K. has an incredibly large House of Commons. They can't even seat everybody. If you've ever gone to watch it, it's quite remarkable. One of the interesting side effects is that some people have argued this helps to reduce party discipline. If you get elected as an MP and you're in a caucus of 300 people, the odds of your ever getting in cabinet are slim, so you need to find something that you're going to do with yourself if you're going to carve out a career as a member of Parliament. By enlarging the House of Commons, you're enlarging the number of backbenchers relative to cabinet. I think that could have an added side effect and benefit of perhaps encouraging a little more independence on the part of members of Parliament. That may be an added benefit, which often doesn't get discussed. I would probably err on the side of quite a number of adjustments to seats. I'd probably err on the side of being as proportional as possible.

● (2020)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Okay. We would have to add more members.

Would the number of members change from election to election to try to get to that proportional result? How would that work logistically? I'm thinking that in the House of Commons, it's going to take us—

Prof. Harold Jansen: To do it purely, you would do half and half. You'd have half districts. Realistically, I don't think doubling the size of the House of Commons is something you should recommend if you want to keep your jobs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I don't think most people would be in favour of that.

Prof. Harold Jansen: No, I don't think so either, but you can achieve proportionality with probably about a third of the list.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes, our recommendation was one third: one-third list, two-thirds....

Ms. Ruby Sahota: How many more members would that increase us to at this point?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: We were a bit more moderate to try to make sure that you don't increase all the time but make a balanced decision as to how much you want to increase the size of the riding. It was not a clear-cut of one-third more MPs; it was that some ridings could accommodate that. You have to be concerned that it does not become unmanageable, but you have to respond to the fact that you have to add members at least for the places where it's necessary, whether it's the Northwest Territories, Yukon, or Nunavut. We added members to them to have a list.

It's in the report. You can see it there.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

What you are saying is very interesting, especially regarding the way you designed the system.

You have the floor, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure he was not referring to my topic, but Mr. Deltell mentioned comments about electing a prime minister, a party or an MP. I know I have asked this part of my question, but I found Ms. Des Rosier's answer interesting. She referred to punishing a party and not an MP. That is an interesting idea because we often hear about excellent MPs who are defeated in electoral waves.

We also hear the opposite. Sometimes some very bad MPs are elected because they are in a safe seat, carried by a party that has had 70% of votes in the riding for the past 150 years. So I found Ms. Des Rosier's answer interesting and that is what we are looking for. It is an equitable vision.

My question concerns something else, however. It pertains to a comment, and I thank you for your indulgence.

[*English*]

Professor Jansen, my question is for you. I hope we can get into it because I know you said it was a larger topic. I alluded to the changing reality of the 21st century with social media and things like that. You said it was something that's difficult to get into. We've talked a lot about online voting and things like that, but I feel there are other consequences when we look at how the media are today. I think of 2012 when I was in France for the presidential elections. They're not allowed to talk about any exit poll results until 9 p.m., or something like that, and they're using World War I radio codes to speak to each other as party operatives to figure out which polls they're winning in. It's absurd. When we talk about youth participation and stuff—and you're bang on when you say it's hard to find that magic bullet—I feel that adapting to these realities is the kind of thing that needs to be done. Maybe we could hearing your thoughts on that, because I think it doesn't line up with online voting. I don't like to put the two together, but I feel it's in the same stratosphere.

Prof. Harold Jansen: The reality is that people, and youth included, do a lot less politically online than you might expect. Our surveys have shown that very few people follow politicians on Facebook or on Twitter or engage with them online, and those people who do intend to be politically interested. So generally, it tends to just provide another tool for the people who are already engaged.

Where I think it connects to electoral systems is to pick up a point Professor Des Rosiers made, which I think is an interesting one. It's about that one thing, breaking down that sense of our political identities being tied to where we live. One of the things that digital technology has allowed us to do is to communicate and find communities of interest that transcend where we live much more easily. I think it has played a role in changing the nature of political identity.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: If I may, I don't mean to interrupt you—

Prof. Harold Jansen: No, no.

● (2025)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: —but that's an interesting point, because that's sort of that reality I'm trying to speak to. In 2016, I'm running in the riding of Beloeil—Chambly, but there could be a candidate who's in British Columbia from the same party as me who might do something inappropriate, or whatever, and then every candidate pays the consequences of that. That's where first past the post, as it was in 1867, is different now, because now you're paying the price not just from what's happening in your own riding or from what your leader is doing, but from the whole team.

Would you agree that we don't really take that into account? I ask because that's a bit of what I'm sensing from how people now relate to politics, which is no longer as regional as it was before.

Prof. Harold Jansen: Yes, and I don't want to downplay the importance of region. It still is profoundly important.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Sure, no doubt. Absolutely.

Prof. Harold Jansen: But I would argue, and I think the debate over electoral reform has shifted away from that. We used to talk about it mostly in terms of regions—and region and language are so profoundly important to this country—but we are increasingly talking about it in terms of the complexity of identities that we have, many of which now transcend region. I don't think digital technology causes that, but exacerbates it and provides another tool for those identities to be expressed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Our challenge now is to reconcile these two realities. We have to focus on the process in a broader context, bearing in mind what happens in communities. People live somewhere and that has an impact on their daily lives.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: There are about 30 seconds left for questions and answers.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I think you have something to say, Ms. Des Rosiers

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I would like to answer both questions.

On page 111 of the report, there is a sample ballot.

In the first part, voters are asked to choose a representative for their riding. In the second part, they have the option of choosing the party or making a list of people they would like to see on the list. This kind of ballot is not that complicated. It just has two options instead of one.

The Chair: Thank you.

Would you like to add anything, Mr. Dubé?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: There is not much difference.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: It is more sophisticated.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Richards now has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: If this works the way I hope it will, I have one quick question for each of you.

I'll start with you, Professor Des Rosiers. In your time with the Law Commission and its report, you obviously studied a lot of different electoral systems. We've obviously heard from a lot of academics here about the various systems they support. Some support the current system, some support other systems, but the one thing I think everyone seems to agree on, or that seems pretty unanimous anyway, is that there is no perfect electoral system. Is that something you'd agree with, that there's no perfect electoral system?

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: The system chooses different values. So, what you want to maximize is that the system that you have or propose is in line with some of the values that emerge and that you want to protect.

Mr. Blake Richards: The commission in its report obviously recommended an MMP system. I think that's something that you seem to personally support as well.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: It was as a result of the process, not before. I did not even know that it existed.

Mr. Blake Richards: Subsequently, I think you now seem to have some personal support for that type of system. I wonder if you can tell us what downfalls or tradeoffs you see in that system.

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Certainly, I think change is scary. Changing the system will have some cost in terms of people adapting to it.

You do worry about small or fringe parties with agendas that would be racist, or so on, getting more visibility than they would normally have. That's the issue with thresholds, so you always worry about that and the worry that you have when you are moving in that direction.

Mr. Blake Richards: Professor Dufour, Ms. May asked a question earlier about whether any parliamentary committee or other body had ever looked at the first past the post system and concluded to keep it. You seemed very eager to answer that question, so I want to give you that opportunity now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Dufour: In my opinion, if we want changes, we have to be realistic and quite modest. Listening to the discussions here, it sounds like the goal is re-engineering, which I think is very ambitious. There is a factor to consider. As I have said, the changes

reflect a more intellectual, more ideological and more conceptual view of politics. From what I have observed of the dynamics of politics in Canada, there is a factor of inertia, a resistance to change.

Those seeking changes in terms of proportionality need to be very realistic. It is not just the committee's work that is at play. There is a whole complex process working against change. I hope your committee and those seeking changes will be pragmatic and not too ambitious. It will not work if you are too ambitious. I am being very direct. I keep repeating this and I apologize. Canadians should in my opinion be able to keep the current voting system.

●(2030)

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you, and if there's time—

The Chair: For one question.

Mr. Blake Richards: —Professor Jansen, earlier in our exchange there were a couple of parts to the question that you did not have a chance to respond to. In particular, did we see an increase in the number of rejected or spoiled ballots when alternative vote systems were put in place? Also, with the alternative vote system, did it actually have an impact on those jurisdictions in terms of reducing the spread between popular support for a party and the number of seats that a party won?

Prof. Harold Jansen: Yes, we did see an increase in vote spoilage.

In Edmonton, in 1952, 9.1% of the ballots were rejected. That's huge. The reason is that in Alberta they had a rule that if you only wanted to vote for one candidate and you put an X by their name, that was considered a spoiled ballot. You had to put a "1", and some people were voting federally and voting with an X. Manitoba didn't have that rule. If you put an X, it was clear that you only wanted to indicate one preference. So their rates of ballot spoilage were more like 1.5% or 1.6%, but it did drop even with that, after it came in. So yes, there was some ballot spoilage.

As far as improving proportionality is concerned, in Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg, yes, they all performed much better and got much more proportional results—more so in Edmonton and Calgary than in Winnipeg. Winnipeg was very complex. There was a big spike in the number of small parties, but that had to do with the general strike. Saskatchewan conveniently provided a control case for us. They didn't do electoral reform and they saw a big spike in parties at the same time even though they didn't change their system.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. DeCourcey who is the last questioner. He'll be batting cleanup in a way.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: It might be a strikeout. We'll see.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Professor Dufour presented

[*English*]

the idea that there's competition that takes place in our political system. I apologize if I'm mistaken in not remembering this correctly, but I believe that Ken Carty and other presenters talked about the inherent tensions that exist in our system now, and that if we change the system or move to something else, the tensions will move to a different place—perhaps not inter-party but intra-party, perhaps not in the legislature itself but at the community level.

I'd like to hear each of your reflections on where possible tensions might be in different electoral systems or different political orders, and maybe I'll start with Professor Des Rosiers, Professor Jansen, and then give Professor Dufour the last word.

[*Translation*]

Prof. Nathalie Des Rosiers: As to proportional systems, international experience certainly does not indicate that there is no struggle between the parties. Politics is a competition of ideas. In any system, there are winners and losers. There might be differing degrees, but election campaigns are obviously characterized by a fight among ideas. This is highly valued by society. People want a debate on ideas.

We asked a fundamental question at that time: whether any voices, ideas or perspectives are excluded from the parliamentary arena in Canada as a result of the current system. That was the key issue. In other words, we had to determine whether the pressures, the existing distortions, and the fact that these viewpoints could not be expressed in the political arena diminished our collective debate. That was also a question we considered.

● (2035)

[*English*]

Prof. Harold Jansen: On day one in Political Science 1000, I teach my students that politics is about seeking support for common projects. It's building coalitions of support. Right now we do have coalition governments, but the coalitions happen within your political parties. The Liberal Party is the government, but the Liberal Party is actually a coalition. There are differences of opinion

that get hashed out in caucus. We don't see them. To me, the big shift that would happen if we went to a proportional system where no party has a majority is that those things would be hashed out in public much more. That's going to be different and take some adjustment for people to get used to, but also for politicians to adjust to as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Dufour: Politics has always been a struggle, and it always will be. That's just the way it is. Our system assumes there will be struggle; it is predicated on struggle. This provides some creative tension. People are sure there will be a struggle. They believe the outcome will be positive.

I will try to be open and say that I hope we will be able to introduce elements of proportional representation without losing the strong points of the current system. That is all I would like to say.

I have said about 10 times that our current system has great strengths. Not many people will say that.

[*English*]

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I hope we got a couple of runners home anyway.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you. We did, in fact, yes. You got a triple there.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Anyway, thank you very much to the witnesses.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the witnesses for their very lively presentations. You have stimulated debate and interest among committee members, at 8 p.m. in the middle of August. We thank you very much for your participation. We have learned a great deal and the discussion has been very interesting.

Thank you and have a nice evening.

The meeting is adjourned.