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Notes for Electoral Reform Committee, July 28, 2016

Thank you for inviting me to appear before the committee. Like many Canadians I've been following your crash course in electoral reform with great interest. As a political scientist who finds the topic as fascinating as it is complex, I've been impressed with the facility with which the committee understands the nuances of various electoral systems and the trade offs of different models of representation. As you are quickly realizing, it's complex and a bit like doing a Rubik's cube. When you change one thing, the others change as well. But unlike a Rubik's cube, there is no right answer. This is important because if there is one word I would summarize electoral systems it's contingency.

Your steep learning curve in a way it makes sense, because you have heard from many of the leading experts on this subject. And therein lies an important conundrum. While I have no doubt that you will master the details of electoral systems, I wonder about the Canadian public. How will they learn? And what is it that they need to learn? I want to discuss the public learning component of electoral reform from my experience as academic director of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly and I want to stress the importance of that in the overall strategy of engagement. Second, I want to talk about the large electoral guideposts that I hope you keep in mind so you are not distracted by the red herrings along the way.

Public learning is the flip side of democratic engagement. This reform exercise has created an ideal opportunity for a national conversation. We all want citizens to be engaged but true engagement cannot occur without a solid foundation of knowledge. And we know that among citizens the variation of knowledge is high and the mean is low. Discussion should be about rational reason giving not emotional position taking. And the former requires a solid foundation of knowledge.

This was the basis on which the Ontario and BC Citizens' Assembly worked. They understood that they could not choose an appropriate system without first understanding what principles were important in them. Canadians are not being asked to create a new electoral system so there is no reason for them to argue for one or another. In my mind, that's the work of this committee. Where Canadians have an important role to play is to tell this committee and members of parliament what are the values and principles that are important to them and how are these evident in various systems.

Your committee has been given five principles to guide your work but they are not as clear as they might be and I might suggest further guidance about what

these mean or be sure that you are using the terms in a similar fashion. For example, some of the principles your committee is working under are about outcomes of the system (like integrity & legitimacy). These are not created by any system but are a product of them. Others are goals a system should embody (effectiveness, inclusiveness) whereas others relate to the mechanics of the system (local representation). The principle of accessibility suggests the principle of simplicity with its language that 'the proposed measure would avoid undue complexity'. Simplicity was one of the principles chosen by the Ontario Citizens' Assembly. (And if I can paraphrase Einstein, 'a good electoral system should be as simple as possible but not simpler'.)

There are other principles not listed but have been used by other studies. Voter choice (chosen by both the Ontario and BC CA) was important one for citizens but does not appear as frequently in the literature as others. This suggests that citizens may think about electoral system differently than experts. That's worth remembering as you hear from experts who offer their opinions about what's important.

Other studies have also refined what effectiveness means. Does it mean "effective parties" (BC & Ont) or an effective parliament (Ont) or an effective government (law reform & NB Commission).

It will be important to clarify these principles so that both MPs and citizens are clear on what it is that they value and whether they are talking about the same things.

In the Ontario Citizens' Assembly process \$6 million was devoted to educating voters. To give you some context of this amount, \$7million was spent by Health Canada in 2014 educating Canadians about the danger of illicit drug use. Surely we believe that the way we elect our democratic representatives is as important as the anodyne information campaign around drugs?

A strong robust educational campaign is more than advertising of course. The government has taken the useful first step of producing a consultation guide. I would take exception with one of your witnesses who characterized this as an 'elite pleasure industry'. I think this matters. If so, surely more is needed both to provide basic education for Canadians about how these principles resonate. but also to inform citizens once this committee reports in December. This is even more important if and when a referendum occurs.

Let me shift gears and talk briefly about electoral systems. There is a debate among scholars about whether they are causes (they create greater participation, more parties, different kinds of parties) or effects (they are a product of a country's culture, regionalism or institutional context). In reality they are both. They both illuminate and they reflect.

In the literature on electoral systems we classify systems by two large categories that may be helpful in your deliberations – output & mechanics

1. Output may be better understood as proportional vs. non-proportional systems. To determine what serves our need best, we need to go back to those principles: Do we want a system that increases the chance of a strong majority government? Do we want increased diversity of representation in parliament? Do we want increased number of parties?

2. The second approach is to think about mechanics. How do you build it and what's the relationship of the structure to the output?

When scholars discuss mechanics they usually refer to three things:

1. How do voters mark their preference? Do they rank or make one choice? Ranking offers greater voter choice to the voter but may not affect the results. Is voter choice something that is important? A categorical choice is simple but may not reflect preferences accurately.

2. How many representatives do you want per district? Ours with one has clear and simple accountability but cannot be proportional. As you increase the number in each district you may increase proportionality. But you sacrifice the connection between the representative and her constituents. Moreover, as you increase proportionality you also may sacrifice local representation. These are trade offs that need to be weighed.

3. The third element in the mechanics is the formula or to put it another way, how do you decide who won? There are generally four ways of determining the winner in electoral districts: plurality, majority, proportional or mixed . Our plurality system has the virtue of being simple. Another way is to insist that candidates receive a majority. This speaks to the principle of legitimacy as the winner received at least 50% of the votes. A proportional system ensures that vote share equals seat share but may sacrifice local accountability or local representation. Finally a mixed formula uses a combination of usually plurality and proportionality to achieve a balance between the two but creates two classes of MPs.

I want to reinforce the model of the Ontario & BC Citizens' Assembly. It was based on deliberation vs consultation. It's not enough to ask people for their opinions when doing so may only reinforce their existing beliefs. There needs to be an honest and robust public learning campaign that establishes connections between these principles – and others – and how they correspond to the kind of representation we want.

The conversation both here and among the public now has put the cart before the horse by emphasizing the product of those values (electoral system) and not their trade offs.

Let me leave you with a final thought. While everyone here has told you that there is no best electoral system, there is. If I can quote Richard Katz the best electoral system “depends on who you are, where you are and where you want to go”.

At this stage, rather than focusing on systems, I hope that you give some thought to these.