

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Conservative members of the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs support the process recommended by the committee, and played a significant role in ensuring that the proposed process would be as open to multi-party input and as sensitive to regional concerns as possible.

However, Conservative members of the committee would have preferred to establish a national Citizens' Assembly on the model of the one that was used to design electoral reforms for British Columbia. We regard the Citizens' Assembly model as being distinctly superior, by every measure of inclusiveness and openness (geographic balance, gender balance, etc.) to the process that has been advocated by the committee.

The BC Citizens' Assembly produced a proposal for electoral reform that—setting aside any consideration of the proposal's specific merits—was supported by 57% of participating voters in a province-wide referendum, and by majorities in all but two of the province's 79 electoral districts. This is a greater level of popular support than has been achieved by any previous electoral reform proposal at the federal or provincial level, of which we are aware.

Part of the reason for the popular success of the electoral model proposed by the Citizens' Assembly is that it had been designed by a representative, randomly-selected group which nobody could accuse of being motivated by partisanship, a desire to protect any specific special interest or group of special interests, or by pressure to achieve elite accommodation at the expense of the general good. It is perhaps for this reason that the Citizens' Assembly model is now being discussed with interest in a number of provinces by advocates of electoral reform (most notably in Ontario, which is preparing to establish a Citizens' Assembly of its own).

Conservative members of the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs also note that under the schedule proposed in this Report, it is possible that a Conservative government will be charged with the responsibility of acting on the recommendations produced by the process proposed in the Report. Bearing this in mind, we note that we would be unwilling to make any changes to the electoral system that would weaken the link between MPs and their constituents, that would create unmanageably large ridings, or that would strengthen the control of party machinery over individual Members of Parliament. As well, we note that a Conservative government would not implement any proposal for substantial change to the electoral system, until the change is endorsed in a national referendum.