

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Published by Order of the Legislature

Special Committee on Democratic Renewal

DATE OF HEARING: 4 NOVEMBER 2015-Evening

MEETING STATUS: Public

LOCATION: MURPHY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS ON ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

COMMITTEE:

Jordan Brown, MLA Charlottetown-Brighton [Chair]
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party, MLA Kellys Cross-Cumberland
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Mermaid
Janice Sherry, MLA Summerside-Wilmot

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Paula Biggar, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, MLA Tyne Valley-Linkletter

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

none

GUESTS:

Vision PEI (Gerry Hopkirk, David Weale); PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Jane Ledwell); Citizens' Alliance (Boyd Allen, Chris Ortenburger); Latin American Mission Program (Catherine Ronahan); Margaret MacKay; Roy Johnstone; Catherine O'Brien; Jake Bartlett; Irwin Judson; Claire Byrne; Gerry Hopkirk; Jim O'Leary; Travis Gordon; Isaac Mazer

STAFF:

Marian Johnston, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees

The Committee met at 7:35 p.m.

Chair (J. Brown): Okay folks, if we could move to seats? We will try and stay on afterwards this evening if anybody's got any further questions. The big thing at this point in time is we have a heavy slate of presentations and we don't want to stay beyond our scheduled time with our presenters.

The one thing that I will tell people – two things I'll tell people: One, we are a legislative committee so we are bound by the rules of our Legislature. I say that really only to say that the proceedings here tonight are recorded and will be transcribed into Hansard, and for that reason I would ask anybody speaking to identify themselves by first and last name and the organization that you're here to represent, if that's the case.

The other thing I will tell you is that when the evening's all said and done – I mentioned this earlier, but I'll mention it again – we'll go around with a microphone, and if you wish to say anything at all – it doesn't have to be as formal a presentation as those that are scheduled here – but if you wish to say anything at all we're certainly here to hear you out.

I guess the subset of that is that we're not geared up as a legislative committee to take and answer questions, but feel free to say what you want to say and we can tell you whether we can answer it if it's a question, I guess, if we want to put it that way.

Without further ado, if you wish to proceed, we'd love to have you.

Gerry Hopkirk: Can people hear me?

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to address this gathering. This is David Weale and I'm Gerry Hopkirk, and we're here to share a presentation developed for Vision PEI. It's titled: Electoral Reform - The why and how of public consultation in Prince Edward Island.

Just to let you know, we're not here tonight to discuss the three options in the white paper, but rather to examine the process of consultation and its impact on wise decision-making.

David Weale: Okay, I'm still David Weale, and I'm going to start off with a little story.

When the European settlers arrived on PEI they discovered a forested wilderness, and many of them were discouraged to the point of demoralization. I remember one story of a man whose wife was in this condition. She was practically immobilized by the immensity of the task ahead, and he asked her to look out and see not the great forbidding forest, but to look out and see fields where growing things were, to look out and see the fields where there were animals, and to imagine that.

Fast forward a couple of generations, and you discover that those people not only survived, they created a landscape that was both productive and beautiful. How were they able to accomplish this? Because they were inspired by a vision. There were many skills to be acquired, mind you, but what kept them going in the right direction was their vision of what might be, even though for some of them it was a vision not realized in their lifetime. It was, in other words, a long-term vision, something conspicuously absent from public life today.

When it comes to decision-making the vision must come first. A community that is to accomplish something worthwhile must begin by imagining together what kind of society they desire. The means by which that vision might be achieved are important, but secondary. Unless there is a shared long-term vision our choice of this adjustment or that modification is not liable to assist us in getting where we want to go. Indeed, we won't even know where we want to go.

It is that way with this present discussion on electoral reform. There are many possibilities, but if there is no shared communal vision the listing of a few choices is premature. We need to envisage what kind of society we wish to become before we decide what electoral steps will assist in getting us there.

Gerry Hopkirk: Action without vision is just putting in the time, but vision with action can change the world. Mind you, vision without action doesn't do very much either, it's merely a dream. But vision with action can change the world.

Regarding electoral reform, our government has proposed three options leading speedily to a referendum. For many, none of these three options is appealing. Is there another worthy possibility? Who decided on these three options? For whom do the three options work, how, and most importantly why? In public consultation why do we jump to solutions before the problem is clearly defined?

Let's think for a minute about consultation. If a political party, government, or any group really wants to consult, it should never start with a position, or three positions. The purpose of consultation in any organization or jurisdiction is not to make people feel consulted so they go along with some proposal or other. Actually, in the organizational literature, that's called manipulation. The real value of consultation is to make wiser decisions for all because all of us are smarter than one of us.

Collaboration is tough. It's much tougher than voting. It's not, however, adversarial, and it does not produce winners and losers. It means that we all get to speak, we all get to be heard. It doesn't mean by being heard that we're going to get our own way, but it does mean that we've had an opportunity to influence the decision and that we can move ahead as a community. Move on, whether your initial option or your initial opinion is the one that carries the day.

In the same vein, collaborative leadership also does not mean formal leaders always get their own way. In fact, wise leaders collaborate precisely because they do not have all the answers. That's why we consult, because all of us are smarter than one of us.

David Weale: Authentic consultation needs to begin with an open-ended discussion, an open-ended question, not a set of preordained solutions. It needs to begin with a discussion of what we want to become, not with measures we think might fix a perceived problem.

For example, we believe that what many Islanders want to talk about is how we can reform our electoral system so it is less adversarial and more representative of a wide range of opinions. Historically, there were three major issues that were a source of antagonism and division among Islanders.

They were ethnicity, religion, and politics. I would maintain that we've come a long way in softening the harshness of that antagonism in the area of ethnicity. I think we've come a long way in breaking down those high barriers that existed between different religions, Protestants and Catholics in particular. But we have not moved in the political realm. It's just as adversarial, just as much based on winners and losers, us and them, as it ever was.

I should say the other great division was whether you cheered for the Toronto Maple Leafs or the Montreal Canadiens, and that one is still carrying on as well.

This present process that we're in right now regarding electoral reform promises to be too swift and too shallow. What we need is true consultation.

When I think back historically, in 1864 PEI felt itself at a crossroads and there was a deep and immense and an ongoing discussion about who we were, what kind of society we wanted to become, how much we wanted to be able to determine our own future, those kinds of things. I think it's time for PEI as a community to ask those kind of soul-searching questions again. We need a vision for this province so that we're not just derivative, floating along in the kind of wake of the mainstream. We need a vision that is clear and compelling and shared, to focus on the why questions before the how and when questions.

We can use this process as a learning example, beginning with a discussion of what makes for healthy communities located in a healthy environment. Only when we have done that will it be time to consider what means might or might not be useful. As we did more than a century ago, we need to ask some really serious and deep questions, and here are a few of them

Gerry Hopkirk: And these questions are radical.

Question: Why are political parties the only model for provincial governance? Let's take a minute and consider that question.

We know that 85% of the problems in jurisdictions are system problems, they're not people problems. We've got 146,000

people in this province – actually, 113 fewer than that – but I think these are the right people, but we have a serious system problem. The system problem that pervades this Island from coast-to-coast, from tip-to-tip, I call it political party paralysis. Now paralysis, we know, comes from doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Most people attribute that to Dr. Phil, but actually it was Albert Einstein. Again and again, doing over and over again and expecting something different to happen.

Political party paralysis divides communities, neighbours, and families, gives power to backroom people, and is the very antithesis of collaboration, transparency, and openness. Party politics is our biggest impediment in this province, and in this democratic renewal consultation it's not even on the table.

I'm sure there are many cities, counties, districts, and municipalities across this country and around the world that have a larger population than Prince Edward Island, have a larger landmass than Prince Edward Island, and are able to govern without party politics, have fewer power positions, can make decisions with a collaborative approach, and don't have debts of billions.

Some other questions. Why do we have the same bureaucratic structure we had over 100 years ago?

Here's a visionary question. Do we wish to move past the adversarial we/they tribalism of our present system? Do we really desire something more inclusive and cooperative? We haven't been asked.

Critical question. How do we protect and enhance our legacy of self-determination? That's really a critical question for us in this province. How do we protect and enhance our legacy of self-determination?

Another reflective question: How do we turn our insularity and our smallness into positive attributes? How do we move out of who we are to where we want to go?

David Weale: Despite the kind of present worrisome situation in PEI and a fair degree of concern, even pessimism, Islanders still have dreams. Islanders still can imagine the

kind of place they would like to live in. Because of our constitutional status we have the opportunity to craft our own future, that wonderful gift that we have. There is a window of opportunity here. I think it's an exciting time to be alive, but it's no time to just be reactive and to grasp hastily at remedies. It's a time to envisage the kind of society we wish to create and then to look at the measures required to move us along that path.

On this Island, and beyond, there is a growing consensus that a fresh approach to governance is required. How many times have I heard people say: The system's not just out of whack, the system is broken?

There are many possibilities, but the one thing we must not do is to waste this opportunity by merely tinkering with what is obsolete, what has had its day. If we do not begin with the vision, that is precisely what we will end up doing. It is our opinion that this white paper, by outlining the opinions in advance and by rushing the process, is squandering the opportunity for a truly creative reform based on the wisdom and the wishes of Islanders.

Gerry Hopkirk: Finally, there's an ancient saying: Poor leaders the people despise, good leaders the people revere, but with great leaders the people say we did it ourselves.

The essence of public consultation is to make wise decisions which reflect the vision of the people. Worth a try? We'd vote for that.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I want to start by thanking you, Gerry and David, for what I thought was a beautiful and a provocative presentation.

I want to offer you a bit of solace. Firstly, to tell you that as far as I'm concerned – and I think I speak for the committee on this – the white paper was not restrictive, it was just a starting point. Personally speaking, we're here to accept and envisage any option that you would like to bring forward. We've had an extraordinary range of ideas brought forth over the last four weeks and this is our eighth community meeting.

The other piece of solace I want to offer you is something I said at the end of the meeting this afternoon. A couple of people afterwards came to me – and we have a different group with us tonight so I'd just like to repeat, because I think we had eight presentations this afternoon. Some of them are very complicated. I like the idea that you brought forward that we need – and it's something I live by – you must have a vision before you do anything or you don't know where you're going.

I took some notes about the commonalities of the different presentations we had this afternoon and I brought them back. I called the principles this afternoon, but you could call it a vision. I found five commonalities between pretty well all of the presentations we heard this afternoon.

The first one was that every vote should count. The second one was that whatever parliament gets elected it should reflect the wishes of the electorate. The third principle was that whatever system you put in place it should minimize the opportunities for the abuse of power. The fourth one was that the parliament should reflect the diversity of our Island community. The fifth one was that we should have a solution which is a made in PEI situation for our uniqueness here.

People came with their individual ideas but, in essence, that's the shared vision that I distilled from this afternoon. I think that's been underlined by what you said. I just wanted to say that because I think it's useful for the people who were not here this afternoon to hear that.

I don't have any questions, I just thank you deeply for what you said.

Chair: Do you have any questions?

I think I would add to that, just along Peter's line of thinking. A few years back I had the privilege, I guess you could say, to participate in a visioning session, I guess you might call it, with Douglas Cardinal, the famous Canadian architect. He is a Blackfoot Indian and has derived basically a way of conducting himself in his creative space from their culture. That essentially involves every project he does going out to the community, coming up with a set of kind of principles and so on and so forth, and

speaking to the people, and building a vision out of that and then putting a framework around it.

I mention that only really to say that we are – again to give you some solace, and everybody else here – we are only in the initial phases of this. We have been sent out with the – the white paper is intended to generate discussion, it's not meant to be prescriptive, so far as we're concerned anyway. We are not bound by it in any sort of a way. It's meant to create ideas and to get people talking. That is how we're taking it, and that is, we believe, how it's meant to be taken.

We are very much here to hear what Islanders have to say and to hear what ideas can be put forth. We don't presume to know the answers. In fact, I think we would probably be very much the opposite, being five members of the Legislature that come in with – perhaps with the exception of Peter – very little background in electoral systems.

Again, to give some solace and to let people know what we're up to and the way we've approached this, we don't presume to know any answers. We do very much value the kind of input you gave us here this evening, and we've had great input throughout the eight meetings that we've had so far. We hope to continue to get that kind of input so we thank you very much for it.

Do you have anything, Janice, that you –

Ms. Sherry: I think one of the things that we tried to do was get the assistance of the legislative staff to set them up to show four of the more used voting systems around the world, really, to invoke some thought and some discussion. Certainly not to say that any one of them we are actually promoting during this process, but it does help for some people who are coming in to get a little bit of background information on the different types of voting systems.

We've certainly heard over the course of four weeks a number of ideas that are outside of the presentations that our staff is making here from the Legislature.

I do want to thank you, but I think sometimes there's a misunderstanding that we're coming in with a preconceived idea as

to what that's going to look like and how we're going to proceed.

One of the things, I think, that legislative committees do is open the doors for the public to come in and engage and to share so that us, as legislators, can take that information and hopefully make good decisions moving forward for all of the people in Prince Edward Island based on what we know and hear.

Thank you. I hope that makes it a little clearer for everyone who's here.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Unidentified Voices: Thank you.

Jane Ledwell: Hi. Nice to see you all. Shall I just begin?

Chair: Yes, whenever you're ready.

Jane Ledwell: I apologize for my weakness of voice. I seem to have developed flu symptoms at about three this afternoon, so I'm not touching anyone.

I'm really happy to be presenting tonight about democratic representation on what is an historic day for Canadian women.

I work with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I am Jane Ledwell, and I am representing this evening our chairperson, Kelly Robinson, who wasn't able to attend the session this evening.

We were surprisingly moved and elated to see a federal Cabinet today with gender parity in the federal Cabinet and greater diversity. As someone said: The Cabinet looks like the Canada I live in.

I could boil down my presentation to Trudeau's mic drop reply when he was asked: Why gender parity? If you didn't hear his response it was: Because it's 2015. But I'm not going to end there.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this evening. The Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a nine-member council appointed by government with a legislated mandate to advise government and educate the public on issues that affect the status of Island

women. One issue that is important to the status of Island women is women in leadership, including political leadership.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women has examined questions of women's leadership for many years and studied local, national, and international research on factors that result in women being under-represented in Canadian governments, including PEI. The council developed and published a policy guide on electoral reform way back in 2005, and supported by what we have learned, the council has advocated for proportional representation since that time.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is also proud to be part of two coalitions you've heard from in the course of these public hearings: the PEI Coalition for Women in Government and the newly formed Coalition for Proportional Representation. Our aim tonight is to add to the excellent presentations these groups have already made and to support the recommendations of those two coalitions.

So why are we in favour of proportional representation?

A key question the Advisory Council on the Status of Women hopes you will consider is this: When we make changes to an electoral system, what problems are we seeking to fix?

In our view the problem that is most pressing in need of a fix is the chronic underrepresentation of women in government and the lack of diversity. The majoritarian, winner-takes-all first-past-the-post electoral system we have now was not designed to produce gender parity or to reduce barriers to women being elected. The electoral system we have now was designed before women were allowed to vote or were even considered persons under the law.

Out of hundreds of people elected to represent their neighbours in the history of the Legislature of Prince Edward Island, only 26 have been women. Ms. Sherry and Minister Biggar, who I'm sorry isn't here this evening but I'm glad is at the swearing in, they are two of those 26 mighty women. We honour your history-making commitment to public service.

In 2005, when the council first took a position in favour of proportional representation, research at that time by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government showed that over 85% of countries, at that turn of the millennium, in which women held 30% more of seats in parliament used some form of proportional representation to elect their governments.

Earlier research in the 1990s by the European Parliament's directorate-general for research showed that at that time – so, 10 years earlier – not only did the vast majority of countries with 30% or more women in their governments use proportionality in their electoral systems, but also that 90% of the countries in the world that had no women parliamentarians used majoritarian electoral systems like the one we have now here.

The electoral system is, of course, not the only factor in getting more women elected, but there's so clearly a strong correlation between women's electoral success and the electoral system. Gender diversity and other kinds of diversity at decision-making tables are an inherent good in a representational government where MLAs are elected to represent a population. Women make up half the population but have rarely, and barely, made it up over more than a quarter of the Legislature. What's worse, the numbers seemed to have stalled with little natural growth.

A variety of factors affect this seeming plateau that women have reached in electoral success, including continuing inequality in incomes, continued imbalance in care-giving responsibility, those broader social questions like that. These contribute to another inequality which is a gender difference in balancing the responsibilities of paid work, unpaid work, and personal, family, and social time.

Women and men and diverse groups continue to experience their day-to-day lives and the world differently from each other. Their different lives, experiences, and voices are needed at the table to shape good public policy.

Research by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government has shown voters do not discriminate against women at the polls.

Female candidates succeed or fail in measure with the parties they're running for. More win when their parties win. More lose when their parties lose. When women do well or do poorly in proportion with the parties they represent, it seems reasonable to conclude that proportionality is a problem that needs to be fixed in our electoral system.

Proportional representation is the best fix for this problem since a proportional system balances voters' choices for representation with the distribution of party seats in the Legislature.

For these reasons, in the coming months when Islanders are consulted about democratic renewal in Prince Edward Island, we strongly recommend: first, that the ballot question for any referendum on democratic renewal offer a clear choice between the current electoral system and a system of proportional representation; and that any educational materials, such as the ones we saw tonight, which were very good, leading up to a plebiscite outline the pros and cons of each system including potential effects on gender balance and diversity in clear, simple, and neutral language.

What do we think about preferential balloting? Preferential balloting is not an electoral system in itself. A preferential ballot is, instead, a tool that can be used either, in first-past-the-post or a proportional electoral system. Our preference is clearly and strongly for a proportional system, as I've just said.

Again, it's really important to ask a fundamental question: Is electing MLAs with a plurality of the votes rather than an absolute majority the problem we wish to fix? We would answer that this problem is not the priority for the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

I should say that in the cursory review of international research we did for this evening's presentation the evidence seems to show that voters don't discriminate against women or other underrepresented groups when they rank candidates on a preferential ballot. But this matter does require further examination, which leads us to recommend that a gender and diversity lens – so, looking at the ways that outcomes

might be different for women and men and diverse groups – be applied to preferential balloting, whether that’s a tool used in a first-past-the-post system or a proportional representation electoral system.

Are there other ways to reduce barriers to more women being elected?

According to the PEI Coalition for Women in Government, the biggest challenge women face is in getting their names on the ballot. That means the biggest challenge is getting nominated. Reducing barriers to women being nominated is a problem worth exploring.

One factor in excluding women from nominations is the way political parties build their lists of candidates. Under our current system each candidate for each party is selected individually and it can be hard to achieve gender parity or increased diversity.

I’ll use an analogy. If we were planning a menu for a dinner party, what factors might we consider? We’d probably want to make sure we didn’t only have appetizers or only desserts. We’d probably want to make sure there was some variety in the flavours on offer. Maybe something vegetarian, for example.

The menu would probably end up with more variety than if we were hosting a potluck. At a potluck, or at least the potlucks that I go to, there’s a high risk of all appetizers or all desserts or sometimes everything is vegetarian and sometimes nothing is vegetarian. Developing a party list is more like planning a menu than it is like hosting a potluck.

When each riding association chooses its candidate it’s offering up its specialty to the potluck table. The party can offer some guidance, asking in general for: Please, more desserts this year. But there’s often resistance to that centralized control and there will always be the potluck partygoer who insists: It’ll be fine if I make my famous appetizers because everyone knows I always make appetizers and everyone loves my appetizers and I’m sure someone else will make a salad. We’ll leave it to someone else.

List systems that are common in proportional electoral systems tend to have more diversity on their menus. This is one reason that women are better represented in parliaments with proportional systems. Presenting a list with all men, or with only a few women, or token diversity, does not sit well with voters. Parties also respond to the peer pressure, the positive peer pressure and competition, to drive the development of diversity when there’s a list system.

It’s hard to incorporate the benefits of party lists in our current winner-takes-all system, but I will add that recent research by our sister advisory council in Quebec, *le conseils statues de la femmes*, offers some suggestions for increasing women’s representation outside electoral change.

Their central recommendation is that government adopt goals for gender parity, implementing the concept of a parity zone, with parties recruiting a minimum of 40% and a maximum of 60% of candidates from women or men, so that neither women nor men would make up less than 40% or more than 60%. *Le conseils statues de la femmes* suggests that financial penalties should be paid by parties that fail to meet this obligation to have their candidates fall in that parity zone. They further recommend that every registered political party be required to submit their record of their recruitment efforts after each general election and then be required to publish their action plan to increase the rate of women candidates.

There are other ways to encourage women’s political participation and to reduce barriers to women being elected. Just two examples include reviewing and updating what expenses are reimbursed for political candidates. For instance, including care-giving expenses, reviewing the hours of the Legislature which are still based on the historical PEI passenger train schedule, and to see if those meet the needs of today’s MLAs and their families. If they do, fine. It doesn’t matter where that came from. But let’s check.

We congratulate you on including recommendations from the PEI Coalition for Women in Government on your democratic renewal website and hope that you will explore these recommendations in detail.

Given that so much can and should be accomplished prior to changes in the electoral system, we recommend that the province of PEI continue to reduce barriers to electing more women through whatever means are feasible. That includes electoral reform, but also, it may include considering changes to electoral financing, implementing a parity zone, or making changes that support work-life balance for MLAs.

Thank you very much.

Oh, I forgot my conclusion. Do I have a sec?

Chair: Sure.

Jane Ledwell: I didn't turn the page. But thank you for your warm applause.

The electoral system that we currently use has been built and shaped over time with values and goals in mind, even though those might be invisible to us now. As we can see, there's a premium in our current system put on geographic balance – ridings distributed across the province – and population balance, with similar levels of population per riding.

Democracy is a dynamic and evolving collaboration among citizens and civil society and political groups and governments. It's time to expand the idea of fairness beyond geographical and population balance and to recognize it's neither natural nor inevitable for women to be under-represented as elected officials.

Women's under-representation is a product of historical and ongoing decisions and processes. It's a problem we can acknowledge and we can fix. We're pleased to be part of the discussion on democratic renewal in PEI and to advocate for changes that could include more women and diverse groups. For this reason, we conclude with a final recommendation that a gender and diversity lens be applied to the electoral renewal process moving forward.

Thank you. Now I'm really finished.

Chair: Questions? Sid.

Mr. MacEwen: First, I'd like to apologize for my delay in getting here, to Gerry and

David who presented before me. Thank you to the audience for waiting, and the indulgence of the committee. I had a wake to go to in St. Peters so I do apologize for coming late.

Thank you very much, Jane, for that presentation. You probably don't remember, but many years ago you taught me English at UPEI. You brought the same passion here today as you did way back then, so –

Jane Ledwell: I do remember now. I hadn't put that together.

Mr. MacEwen: I have a question. This afternoon our last presentation had talked about a model where we had dual member ridings, male/female in each riding. I know Kim Campbell has put that model before again, too.

My apologies if you had mentioned that, but what's your thoughts or your opinion on that model?

Jane Ledwell: The reason I didn't include that in the presentation – that was a proposal made for all of Canada by Kim Campbell at A Bold Vision conference last year. Her bold vision for Canada was gender parity in the House of Commons achieved by increasing but not doubling the number of seats in the Legislature and having one woman and one man elected in each of those districts.

The reason I didn't include that in the presentation this evening is that the history of dual member ridings in Prince Edward Island is fraught. There is still some historical baggage and even some pain about the way that dual member ridings were distributed. What David and Gerry were talking about, about divisions, those dual member ridings were often ways of entrenching divisions between Catholic and Protestant in particular, and we have to recognize that particular history for Prince Edward Island. When we're thinking about solutions that are appropriate for Prince Edward Island the history of division created by dual member ridings may be too much to overcome, and it may not be the best way forward. But it's certainly a simple way of implementing gender parity quickly.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, appreciate that.

Ms. Sherry: Thank you, Jane, that was a great presentation.

I know that as an elected female to government and spending nine years representing the people of Prince Edward Island, I feel it to be incumbent upon me to ask some difficult questions and get some clarification because myself, I am extremely supportive of women in politics, and I think that we do make very strong representatives for a constituency and for Islanders in general.

My question to you – and I asked in a couple of other presentations – why do you feel that a proportional representation process will help get more women elected? Are you thinking of it in terms of getting on the list and then sort of when the proportionality part comes into play that women would get into office from the list?

Jane Ledwell: List systems seem to be correlated with stronger numbers of women and greater diversity. Women can and do get elected under first-past-the-post. You're a shining example. But there seems to be, not only in PEI and not only in Canada, a plateau that is very difficult to get beyond. It seems that there is a correlation between systems that incorporate a list and greater representation of women for the reason that I outlined, which is that it looks bad to put out a list that's all men. If you don't have diversity on that list it looks bad to your competitors, it looks bad to the public.

There's what's called a contagion from one party to another in building the diversity when there is a list system. It's a good contagion. It's not you catching the flu from me because I'm over here. It's a good contagion that's bred of the parts that are positive about the competition of political parties.

Ms. Sherry: In order to make the list, to get on that list, is there a competitiveness at that level or is it a number of people that are involved in that party that sort of make the decision about who goes on the list? Again, this afternoon we talked about this.

There does seem to be some confusion about how that list comes about. The capabilities of women, to me, are somehow compromised to think that they can't run in

an election campaign and get elected. I do realize that there does seem to be a plateau – this being my forth election and I don't see the number of women around me growing, in fact, it diminished in the last election. I'm an optimist and I do believe that anybody who's training, whether it's for a marathon or whatever, before there's real results you sort of have a plateau and then things move upward.

I think as women, especially those that are in leadership roles, the stronger the women are and the better examples they are, we will encourage and break through that plateau by encouraging and recognizing that women can do a job and win a race every bit as much as their male counterparts. It's been proven that if they get on the ballot many times they'll do better.

Jane Ledwell: The challenge is getting on the ballot. That's the issue that is central to the question that you've asked. Equal Voice Canada, which advocates for greater representation of women in parliaments across Canada, estimates that with the current system it would take 89 years to achieve parity, following the trends that have been happening. As you say, you've seen the number of women increase, but also fall back.

I think it's also important to acknowledge, in talking about list systems, we have closed lists in our first-past-the-post system, it's just that they are candidates nominated one-by-one in riding associations. There's no reason that there can't be processes that are just as inclusive, just as democratic, just as collaborative within the processes to create lists. I don't have the research on all of the ways that that happens, but there is absolutely no reason that that has to be dictated from a central party position. I think it's really essential that we acknowledge that we do have closed lists in our system. They are selected by riding associations and by party members. There are grassroots processes. Those could also be applied in creating a list of 27 in a different way rather than one-by-one. Okay?

Ms. Sherry: Thank you very much for sharing that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Jane, I'd just like to thank you.

Again, I'm struck by the depth and the breath of the skills and the capability of people on our little Island here. Presentation after presentation is just such depth and quality. Thank you. I hope, by the way, it wasn't symbolic for this Island that you didn't turn the page.

You mentioned one thing, and it was brought up this afternoon that you felt – oh, I was keeping a note here and I've lost it – you were talking about the preferential ballot being, I think you used the term, it's a tool rather than an electoral reform. Somebody else this afternoon put it even more bluntly than that. They said: Preferential ballot is a partisan fix, not an electoral reform. Do you not think that it will take us any further forward?

Jane Ledwell: I was looking at the preferential ballot almost exclusively from a gender perspective and whether or not I could find any research that showed that a ranked ballot discriminated against women. What I found was mostly – there hasn't been a lot of research, but the research seems to show aren't discriminated against at the polls when their names are on the ballot, regardless whether it's a ranked system or not.

Again I would ask the question: What is the problem that preferential ballot is seeking to fix? Why is it more valid to have an absolute majority than accepting the plurality of votes in a district? There was one instance of a coin toss in the most recent election – that's a very rare occurrence – but most of our governments have been elected with most members elected through a plurality for quite some time.

Is that the priority issue that we want to fix? It's not that preferential balloting is not an electoral reform – it is an electoral reform, but it's not an electoral system. It's not systematic and it can be very effective for choosing one leader, for identifying the – and rallying the support to the leader of a party, or to the president, or perhaps to the mayor when other – in a municipality. But is it the most effective way of making up our Legislature? Is there a risk that it will entrench the old time politics that have been dominant in the province with two parties' primacy unchallenged in terms of forming government?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: Jane, I'd like to just ask or perhaps see if you're able to drill down on one point. Your presentation was great and answered a lot of questions that I have had over time. Some of them you get a little bit more insight on running in terms of nomination process and so on and so forth, which not many actually contemplate when they think elections and how we elect people.

I'm wondering, though, if your organization or your research enabled you to drill down even further then to say: If we get people through a nomination and on to a ballot they will do well. Are there any particular things you can point to to say that women aren't as likely to put their name on a nomination ballot because of x, y, z, or maybe that they're not asked as much to put their name on a ballot?

Jane Ledwell: You've put a finger on it and it's all of the above. But the first challenge is that women often aren't asked.

Chair: If a woman's name is on a ballot is she as likely at that stage to be nominated as –

Jane Ledwell: I don't have the numbers on nominations but I think we can see that the real barrier is getting the names on ballots, is getting nominated, and we see the numbers that each party nominates. In the two parties that have gone back and forth in power, the numbers have not been high, they haven't broken 30% ever, if often. I would have to look up whether they've ever reached 30%, and that's with the best intentions. But when each contest is between two and three individuals at the riding level there are so many factors that can play into that.

Women not only may not be asked, but they may be asked and need to be asked more frequently than men. There has to be a valuing of the qualifications that women bring to an electoral process. Sometimes there is not the same value placed on work that women do.

We could see in the lead-up to today's gender parity in the federal Cabinet all kinds of rumblings. There was a great satirical thing going around yesterday that said: The promise of gender parity increases the

percentage of men who are concerned about women's qualifications by 5,000% because there is that undervaluing. All of those factors make a difference.

Having the financial resources can be a big challenge. We still have a society where there is unequal income between women and men and that can be a significant barrier. Care-giving responsibilities still fall more to women than men – as much as that's changing – and electoral expenses do not reimburse care-giving expenses the same way they reimburse advertising expenses.

Chair: Nominations, we should be clear, they don't reimburse them, period. I think that's part of what you're saying –

Jane Ledwell: Yeah, but that's after the nomination.

Chair: Yeah.

Jane Ledwell: But entering into a nomination process, you might be looking at what you could afford if you were to run, what you could afford in terms of –

Ms. Sherry: We would all do that.

Jane Ledwell: Yeah, oh, absolutely, but there's still a difference –

Chair: I think your point is (Indistinct) –

Jane Ledwell: – between the general income of women as a group – not individual women – but as a group women's income continue to be lower than that of men at a rate – in PEI it's a little smaller than the national gap because all our wages are so much lower, but it's a gap of about 20%. So \$0.80 of every dollar that a man earns, a woman working full-time, full year, makes about \$0.80 on that. That adds up over the course of a month, a year, a decade.

An Hon. Member: An election campaign.

Jane Ledwell: An election campaign.

Chair: This is one that often bugs me, I'm interested in – I think I know the answer to this, but I'm going to ask it anyway for the benefit of everybody else. I'll perhaps preface it with saying I know when I went to law school 10 years ago my first-year class

was 60% women and 40% men. We often hear the comment that women aren't as apt to like an adversarial setting which I think, partially because of that statistic, is crap, frankly. Not to say that the legal profession's always adversarial, but it can be.

I'm interested to know whether that is a myth. We've heard that a few times on the road now. I'm interested to know whether that's a myth or whether that's something that holds up in terms of what you hear.

Jane Ledwell: I'm going to answer a question you didn't ask, and that's when you reflect on the makeup of your law class the reason there was 60% women is that quota systems were applied to increase the – over a period of time in law schools and medical schools, quota systems were applied so that there would be a greater balance between the women and men in professional programs, and that wasn't a natural increase.

As for adversarial versus collaborative systems, I think that there may be some gender differences. Those are recounted anecdotally, but I do think that's changing too and more men, and younger men in particular, are looking for collaborative solutions just as much. One of the reasons for supporting proportional representation is that with the tendency, or with an increase in the number of coalition governments, it really means that there is a required collaboration. It's not optional. If you want to exercise power you have to use those skills of negotiation, of collaboration, and of building consensus to pass legislation, so it really does work against the concentration of power.

Chair: Thank you.

Anything else, guys?

Thank you. Again, that was a great presentation and (Indistinct).

Whenever you guys are ready (Indistinct). Okay, yeah. Whenever you're ready, yeah.

Chris Ortenburger: Hi, I'm Chris Ortenburger and I'm chair of the Citizens' Alliance of Prince Edward Island, and this is vice-chair Boyd Allen.

Boyd Allen: Yes, we represent the Citizens' Alliance of Prince Edward Island, which is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing environmental and democratic rights. We are a collaborative voice for positive change.

Chris Ortenburger: The Citizens' Alliance of Prince Edward Island is also a member of the PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation.

Boyd Allen: We are pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this timely, public discussion about democratic renewal on PEI. We do appreciate the integrity displayed by the committee members and the genuine interest you have in engaging with Islanders.

Chris Ortenburger: We know that you've addressed some of the issues that other groups have brought up as far as the timeline and things, but we also have some concerns that we thought we would go over since this group probably hasn't heard the same ones and all of the materials won't be on the website for a few more days.

Boyd Allen: The first is about the terms of engagement.

Regarding this current round of community meetings, most presenters to this committee, from Alberton to Souris, have clearly and strongly relayed how difficult it has been to adequately prepare and participate in these meetings within the compressed timeline they've been bound with. The number of meetings, the locations and times of day, the tight three-week span, and very little lead time meant that this committee has only met with a fraction of Islanders. There are a number of Islanders whose voice may never be heard on this critical issue. It could also lead to the misconception moving forward in the process that sparse attendance to these meetings reflects lack of public interest in the question as a whole. Outcomes based on incomplete input are of questionable value and likely don't fairly represent what Islanders want.

Chris Ortenburger: The whole process of electoral reform or democratic renewal really needs to be more like a marathon than a sprint, but it seems too obvious to us that this phase of public engagement has been

limited by the upcoming fall sitting of the Legislature and by government's time commitment on another phase of the process, assessing electoral boundaries.

Using the White Paper on Democratic Renewal and Motion No. 33 as our only available resources, we don't know what additional opportunities there will be for public engagement with any other facets of electoral reform and democratic renewal.

Boyd Allen: There have been many assurances made by members of this committee that there will be ample opportunity for Islanders to actively participate in the process of democratic renewal as it evolves. This assumes a great deal of public trust in government and the methods by which public policy is created. This public trust is not particularly strong at this point in history. This lack of strength is a key reason why we're having this discussion in the first place.

Chris Ortenburger: Can the Legislature change the timeline for the electoral boundary phase of the initiative?

We understand the need to move this along, we understand the next election is in 2019 and we're, presumably, not going to change that, but we want this to be a broadly-based inclusive discussion with ample time available for all participants to become adequately informed about the points being discussed and to have their questions brought up. To clearly adjust the existing timeline now would be a very positive step toward these goals.

Boyd Allen: Regarding attendance at public meetings, we do see robust organization during an election, a thorough use of energy and resources to engage people, and in that case, to get out the vote. That organization and energy could be tapped into to drive public involvement in every component of this process.

Chris Ortenburger: The quantity of those involved is important, but so is the quality of public engagement and that is to say in the manner by which people are represented. This is highlighted in the composition of this committee, which is a derivative from the election of the first-past-the-post system which of course we know didn't accurately

represent the popular vote from May's election.

For instance, the NDP is not represented at this table, and that in itself is a symbol of the need for electoral reform. We'd really like you to consider somehow, in some sort of official capacity, including that voice as this initiative continues.

Boyd Allen: The second concern is about perceived bias in the White Paper on Democratic Renewal which is a base document for this whole process.

It appears that this Committee had little to do with the creation of the white paper. It was crafted by the Premier's office with input from senior public service officers and other sources. To our knowledge, there was no involvement of any elected official of any political stripe, or any other knowledgeable or representative stakeholders in this document. Whose views does it reflect and what outcome does it encourage?

Chris Ortenburger: The white paper's proposed question for a referendum on electoral systems doesn't ask an even question such as: Do you want a change in voting system or no? Instead, it cleaves one side so it's practically assuring that the vote's going to be split and there will be no clear majority, and that's kind of ironic when you think about what we're up against.

In discussing the major choices for electoral systems there appears to be a bias toward preferential balloting, both in the white paper and in some of the supplementary materials made available.

Boyd Allen: Now, preferential balloting has been commented on by others, and we would add that as it appears in the white paper it will do nothing more than increase the majority of seats without a majority of votes. This needs to be discussed further, if further discussion is actually included in the process.

Chris Ortenburger: Another issue is that the white paper and supporting documents include criticisms of proportional representation systems that show some bias against them, and we want to go through a couple of them.

Boyd Allen: Okay, Proportional representation is not prevalent among western countries.

Chris Ortenburger: Proportional representation is in many countries, most newer democracies, and in European stalwarts such as Germany.

Boyd Allen: It's too complicated, too much alphabet soup.

Chris Ortenburger: Given ample time and support and information, it's explainable. Those who understand these systems, though, should avoid using just the acronyms only. Given adequate access to information and opportunity to digest it, Islanders are quite capable of becoming comfortable with any new system of casting their ballots if it supports a system that they agree with.

Boyd Allen: It causes chaotic minority governments.

Chris Ortenburger: Collaboration is an effective means for government members to work together. We see glimmers of this with the third party member now, and with Dr. Dickieson a decade ago, and we see also that the government and opposition members often or sometimes collaborate on more heartfelt motions.

A representative from the Young Voters of PEI had said her generation wants to see collaborative government, and that they are tuned out by the smothering effects of false majorities.

Boyd Allen: It only supports political parties.

Chris Ortenburger: Implementation of a new voting system would create a new dynamic within political parties. It would not simply be a we/they win-at-all-costs organizational model.

Also, as electoral models evolve, so must the political parties. First of all, it's our system so we can build it in a manner we want to support representation outside the party system too.

Boyd Allen: The Island had its chance to vote for proportional representation in 2005.

Chris Ortenburger: Others have detailed that skewed process in that endeavour, and it's vital that this process does not fall victim to the same biases. What a missed opportunity it would be if we wait yet another generation, carrying along the same accumulated baggage, to talk about good electoral reform.

Boyd Allen: Okay, the big picture. What system will serve Islanders best?

Chris Ortenburger: I don't think any of us can say that definitively. I think we've heard a lot. I think listening to people like Gerry and David and talking about vision and looking at the big picture is what we really need to do.

I think we have obvious solutions to improve some things such as adjusting the timeline for this process and for stepping back and evaluating fair questions.

Boyd Allen: There are not so easily managed suggestions to address the need to insulate this process from political interference: a citizens' assembly.

Chris Ortenburger: Which is not to be confused with the citizens' alliance.

Boyd Allen: But it could be reinvented and re-established. It could provide a representative forum through which ideas could be presented and discussed. A forum not hampered, moulded or driven by political agendas or preferred outcomes.

Chris Ortenburger: The role of this committee, as defined in Motion No. 33, that was back in July in the Legislature, is to facilitate this process and, we assume, too, to direct various resources – and we don't mean just money – to encourage Islanders to be full partners in every element of this process.

Boyd Allen: Graham Steele, who was a finance minister in Darrel Dexter's NDP government in Nova Scotia from 2009 to 2013, said: It will not be politicians who will lead the change. The only person who can change politics is the engaged citizen.

Chris Ortenburger: And it's our shared responsibility to do this right.

Boyd Allen: We thank the committee and those who made the choice to come here this evening. We wish the committee well in crafting its report to the Legislature. We look forward to participating in the next steps in this initiative.

Chair: Thank you, folks.

(Indistinct) want to stay for any questions the committee may (Indistinct)?

I just want to take a second and address some of the points brought up in relation to timeline and process. We've done this a few times before so if you've heard it already, please bear with me for the benefit of everybody else here.

Essentially the process I detailed earlier, the timelines that we're dealing with are not any timelines drawn in the sand or stone or anything else. Rather, there's a practical timeline that we are faced with which links back to the requirement that electoral boundaries be considered before the next election, or after every third election which we are now after.

The legislation requiring a commission to be struck, I think it was either 60 or 90 days after the last election, was amended in the spring sitting to make that timeline one year after the third election. So a commission which is prescribed will have to be struck, basically, by May 4th of next year. Presumably it would start its work from there.

The practical element of it is that if there is to be any change in the way we elect people, which includes a change in the electoral boundaries necessarily – so, in other words, if we were to switch to a proportional system or really anything other than what we have right now – that commission would need that information before it could finish its work, certainly, and probably at a pretty early stage in the process.

That is a practical factor that we have to consider and it's something that I think it'd be fair to say we have talked about at great length as a committee and tried our best to deal with.

The other thing, obviously in relation to it, with timing, is we also struggle to balance

what I would call momentum against a lack of momentum. We've seen processes that take too long and stall out. We've seen processes that go too quick and we don't get the input that we need. Really, we as a committee have to keep our hand on the tiller and try and navigate that as best as we possibly can within the parameters that we have. I certainly would recognize that issue.

In terms of the white paper – I said this before and I do want to say it again. The white paper, I think to be clear, was tabled by government. Not to beat around the bush, but it was tabled by government. It was probably mostly prepared by senior level bureaucrats. I would agree with that statement. But it's a government paper. It's intended to be a white paper, which essentially means a discussion paper or a starting point for a discussion.

We wish to indicate right from the outset we are in no way considering a preferential ballot to be a favoured way of going. We've gone to great lengths of saying that we are not tied to that system or any system in particular. Our job here is to come and hear what you folks have to tell us and we'll bring that back to the Legislature and let them know from there.

Our take on the white paper, as bluntly as I can put it and as I have already, is that it's a discussion starter and it's meant to generate discussion. If I have a little bit of insight into it at all to provide, it would be that the history we have on Prince Edward Island is of a plebiscite that involved a mixed member proportional system, so we all know a little bit about that. Very few of us know much about a preferential system. I do not know for sure if that's why there's more emphasis in the white paper on a preferential balloting system than on the mixed member or the existing system. But if I had a good guess I would think that would be at least a large factor in it. I want to mention that just for the sake of mentioning it.

I think you had said something along the lines of: Nobody can say what system will serve Islanders best. I think that's an interesting point. That's why we're here, is to find out: What are the possible systems?, and to go back to Islanders and ask: What do you want? Just to drive the point home, that is kind of our guiding – we don't presume to

know what Islanders want, and I think as politicians we would be pretty misguided if we were to set out presuming that.

I think we want to be clear that none of us are presuming any outcome in anything that we do on this committee. We have set out with that mind-set and I think we have stuck very well to it and will continue to do so.

Any questions, guys?

Sid.

Mr. MacEwen: Question.

Thank you very much, Chris and Boyd.

The citizens' alliance has been at – I appreciate very much that you guys have been at most meetings. I'm not sure if everyone, but pretty much every one of your representatives.

Thank you for your comments initially when we had our first couple of meetings and recommendations on how we can change the process to make it more engaging with the audience and stuff. We appreciate that. I'm sure we didn't do everything that you would have wanted, but hopefully we made some amends.

I mentioned this afternoon about our provincial process for electoral reform and now with a new prime minister that has stated this past election would be the last time we vote federally with a first-past-the-post system. I'm curious about your comments on our approach running at the same time as the federal process, our timelines as advised in the white paper – which we're not beholden to, but has been advised – those timelines versus the federal timelines and how you think that will affect our process.

Boyd Allen: As I understand, the federal process is built around an 18-month process which is certainly much more, lends itself to an awful lot more public education than the provincial counterpart that we see here.

I think that there could be lessons learned from that protocol that have not been applied here.

Chair: I think we should be very clear to say, too, from what I know of the federal process, it's that a decision will be arrived at within 18 months, which would be very similar to the timeline that we would be on here. Everybody gets a – the white paper was tabled in the spring sitting. We're looking at a plebiscite, the earliest, the spring of next year, and we would envision work after that to get to a final result. Just so everybody has a bit of an idea for comparison.

Mr. MacEwen: That's fair.

Chris Ortenburger: I think they're both really positive and I think it's really quite hopeful to be where, both federally and provincially, we're talking about this. I think in the white paper on that front page where it said where it came from, too, it said that PEI has these great turnouts and we also could be one of the first provinces to actually do this.

I think, looking at what's happened with other provinces, though, where it hasn't worked, I think then we have to be really careful about – then again, if a question is arrived at too quickly and it's tossed at people, then there is going to be a bit of curling up. I think others, like BC and all, have had issues with that where then they've tried to do this and it hasn't worked and they said: Well, it hasn't worked.

I think that's why we're saying: Can we back up? Can we still look at 2019? I think Islanders are ready, I don't want to lose any momentum, but I think the idea of the question and so therefore before that the idea that we need to have that timeline that's kind of what – it still feels like a stranglehold that this Committee is expected to send a report to the Legislature in November and there should be a question on there. I think we're still kind of feeling that that's what the white paper wants you to do.

Again, I know you're supposed to guide public engagement and make recommendations in response to the white paper. It doesn't mean you have to. I think a lot of people are still feeling that it's – I don't want to say it's a done deal, but we're moving along to having that happen in the spring and Islanders may or may not be ready for a plebiscite question right now.

Boyd Allen: It's also unclear, the next phases of this whole process, how they will unfold. If we don't know the process, then how can we prepare for the process or participate in it?

Chair: I take your point. We have actually grappled with that a fair bit, Boyd.

Just two comments in relation to that. I guess what I would say in response is, again, we don't presume to know. Two things: We are a legislative committee so we will report back to the Legislature regardless of whether we have a question that we're settled on or not. We will report. The second part of that is we will report to and take direction from the Legislature. We could be told to stop work after the fall sitting. We really don't know where we'll end up.

In saying that, I think we would have some expectations, and as I said to the crowd here tonight, unless something materially changes that none of us are aware of, we will be back doing some kind of community consultations throughout the winter and into the spring. Exactly how those meetings will be set up I can't say here for sure, but they will continue.

Boyd Allen: I don't think that anybody's asking for precision at this point. I think the general concern is that once your report does go to the Legislature there is no guarantee that there will be other public opportunities to participate in the process.

Chair: There's no guarantees in life, I think would be – but beyond that, as much as we can say it will happen, it will happen, I guess. Unless there's a material change in the way things are heading, we'll be back through the winter and the spring. I don't mean to get into a debate, but obviously I can't say it with anymore certainty than that. But with as much certainty as you can possibly say something in a political process, we will be back through the winter and the spring.

Chris Ortenburger: We appreciate that. Again, I think we're hearing, listening to the other seven meetings before now, that people are feeling a bit rushed. It's been a busy fall. We want to keep this conversation going, and we need to decide if that electoral boundaries seems to be staring everybody in

the face, and then also the idea of does the government really need a plebiscite at all for this process, as some others have mentioned.

But thank you so much for being open to our comments and we know you'll continue to be. As far as I know there's another public meeting now set for Monday the 16th in Stratford so it'll be similar in format for this for any other groups?

Chair: Yeah.

Chris Ortenburger: It's going to be a busy November.

Chair: Yeah, 7:00 at Fox Meadows.

Chris Ortenburger: All right, so thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

We're ready whenever you are, Catherine.

Catherine Ronahan: This seems really short.

My name is Catherine Ronahan and I'm here representing the Latin American Mission Program, or LAMP, as many may know it. We have a few LAMP members in the room here tonight.

As a representative of LAMP, we are members of the Diocese of Charlottetown, and as members of the diocese, and with our Island friends, we're called together as people to rejoice in our expression of faith and hope in building a just society. We do overseas mission work and our experience in doing this is a learning opportunity which helps us to be aware of our call to stand in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed, wherever they are. This experience helps us to be more aware of the injustices not just overseas but here at home as well in our own society.

Through our missioning process we come to understand the way in which this injustice is connected with, and contributes to, a wider global injustice. This in turn moves us to encourage and create a just society for all peoples. LAMP is part of the PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation so we'd like to thank you for this opportunity to present to this Special Committee on Democratic Renewal for PEI.

Through this presentation we hope to share a perspective about proportional representation which is not unlike what you've heard probably in a lot of your other presentations, but is unique in its standpoint through sharing some of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. For many people these social teachings are very progressive and are some of the best kept secrets of the Catholic Church. I'd like to share with you those secrets, make them more public.

First of all I would like to talk about what we think about the nature and purpose of government. We think the nature of government should reflect the deepest desires of the human heart, or love. It is the way people can organize and live together and have fulfillment, both individually and collectively. We as a society can have our physical requirements for life and spiritual life met.

So what's the purpose of government and how do we fulfill that purpose? Governments generate revenue and spend it for the intention of improving lives of its citizens. This principle is in service of the common good, to provide goods, services, and resources to the collective of society so members of society can fulfill their potential and so our society can fulfill its potential in the world.

Here are some of those secrets I talked about, and they're not really secret, I have them referenced here in the document. Some of these things that I would like to share with you that would help our case in talking about proportional representation.

Our experience in LAMP comes from the theology of liberation. Theology of liberation sees God in the history of the world as being lived through the experience of the poor and hears the cry of the oppressed. Liberation involves political and social liberation, the elimination of causes of poverty and injustice. It involves the emancipation of the oppressed from all those things that limit their capacity to develop themselves freely and with dignity. Liberation also includes liberation from selfishness in relationship with God and with other people. The central tenet of theology of liberal is the preferential option for the poor.

Another principle that I'd like to talk about is the principle of subsidiary, and this is an organizing principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest or lowest or least centralized competent authority. Political decisions should be taken at the local level, if possible, rather than by a centralized authority. In other words, there shouldn't be any decisions about me without me.

Decisions made by higher-level organizations are required to consider the consequences, whether intended or not, on the lower-level organizations. Attending to this principle facilitates broad discussion, assures that diverse voices of the community are heard, and this results in decisions that have more support.

The last piece I'd like to speak about is *sensus fidelium*, and this is the sense of the faithful, or in other words, collective wisdom. Functionally, this can be lived out in a collective approach to decision making in order to get the best ideas that work for the common good for the whole of society. The common good must also reflect our understanding of the rights of citizens and residents which have developed over time.

In talking about our current electoral system, the first-past-the-post, it has been remarkably resilient in resisting the cries of the poor and the oppressed. Individuals who form government, you folks that we're speaking with tonight, are not responsible for this unfairness of this system. However, individuals, including all of in this room, can take responsibility for their unwillingness to make changes to the unjust system. To paraphrase Billy Joel: We didn't start the fire, but we sure can try to fight it.

First-past-the-post or winner takes all – I think a lot of people have already talked about the negative results that can happen with that. Every vote counts. We talk about every vote counts, but they really don't in this system. Even parties that can have a large portion of the popular vote, but don't actually get a seat as a representative in the government. Also, as in the recent federal election, this system can lead to strategic voting by the electorate out of fear rather than voting based on their values or the actual candidate they prefer.

The preferential rank ballot, or second-past-the-post, can be framed as an easy sell to voters as a way to move into a proportional representative system. It's easy to explain and enables a cross-section of the population to have their opinions reflected. However, this type of electoral system can potentially have the same results of a first-past-the-post system, but they're more firmly entrenched. Again, it excludes the views of those who do not vote for the top two candidates.

Here's my case for proportional representation. In considering how governments should operate, how does proportional representation reflect the ideal nature and purpose of government, the preferential option for the poor, and our social teachings?

A system of proportional representation has the ability to rebalance the current decision-making structure through the transformation and without throwing out its historical roots or the principles of responsible government. It allows for further development of those same principles to be held true at Confederation and expanded over time so as to make the form of electing representatives more inclusive. It allows for individuals' votes, but balances out the members of the Legislature to reflect the diversity of our society.

It is likely the closest to that we can get to the meeting – the principle of subsidiary as legislators will more accurately reflect the composition of our society. In its most basic application, subsidiary fosters participation in the democratic process. Society gathers in so many forms. We gather as family, we gather as friends, groups, associations, organizations, and the participation of individuals in each of these areas weaves the fabric of our society. The lower level or the most basic parts of our society give expression to the hopes, dreams, creativity, desires, and commitment of individuals, and the higher level or more complex parts of society, have an obligation to incorporate and reflect the opinions of the more basic parts in their decisions.

Decisions made by government in a proportional representation model will have more input and will review from more varied perspectives. A more inclusive Legislature will more accurately reflect the

collective wisdom and ensure that our elected representatives can determine the balance which meets the common good.

Ensuring diversity among legislators leads to an institutional culture where the experience from the lower level organizations is not simply presented by the means of witness from external sources but through the individual legislator's life as presented to the Legislature as a whole. Decision makers in government are tasked with apportioning some amount of the common wealth to the benefit of the common good. Decisions should then be informed in the broadest and most inclusive way, and as close to the group of people who are affected by the decisions. This can happen when the individuals in the Legislature most naturally reflect the diversity of experience, gender, culture, age, and class in society.

Democracy is not determined solely from a legislative body nor from a voting process. The goal of responsible government is participation. Our path in Canada to universal suffrage seems to have been completed once Aboriginal persons were given the right to vote, but we are still challenged by the feeling that the public does not participate in the action of government except with our periodic ability to vote.

Proportional representation is a more natural democratic form to include the opinions of more people and in this way is more natural to foster broader participation in decision-making structures. The former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan has stated that "...good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development." Good governance covers many aspects of our society, and that includes a just electoral system, and can assist in the development of our society into one that is diverse, inclusive, and representative of the common good.

Is a PR system perfect? The simple answer is no, but nor is the system that we have right now. However, this is an opportunity to continue evolving our democratic system on PEI for the common good of all Islanders and for the love of God.

Thank you.

Chair: Questions? (Indistinct) Janice, questions? Sid? (Indistinct).

Thank you very much.

Catherine Ronahan: Okay.

Chair: Whenever you're ready.

Margaret MacKay: I'm Margaret MacKay and I'm presenting as an individual. I live in the Summerside area –

Unidentified Voices: (Indistinct).

Chair: Quiet, folks, please.

Margaret MacKay: I live in the Summerside area, and I've been around both the Progressive Conservative and the Liberal parties since 2007, and have been a student of politics since about three years of age when my dad was Premier Walter Jones' herdsman in the late 1940s. That ages me.

Over many years I have observed that we only make changes in government when there is a dissatisfaction with the governing party and a mood for change in the population, and a viable alternative, as we just saw in the federal election on October 19th.

Canadians, and especially Prince Edward Islanders, are reasonable, compassionate people who will give any government a second chance as long as they make no major mistakes.

In the last provincial election there was a backlash against the previous Liberal government and also against the Progressive Conservative Party, and Stephen Harper as well as Mike Duffy, resulting in the NDP and the Green Party benefitting in votes. The Greens were very successful because they targeted one seat. The exceptions were districts 15 and 27 where the PC party won this election, and they almost won all those seats in the 2011 election.

When you have a situation where there is a mood for change, people don't vote for a certain party except for the very loyal lifetime supporters who would never vote any other way. They vote against the party,

and that's where you get change in government and that's where you get, also, drastic changes in the number of seats.

This is why we should not move to another voting system, especially based on voter percentages. You don't get changes in government just based on any other reason other than there is a mood for change.

I have problems with the recommendations made by the judges in the electoral reform report commission as judges don't have the right to vote and therefore, probably, do not follow politics and governments very closely.

Having attended several of these meetings on democratic reform, until today I have not seen a whole lot of interest from the voting public.

Also, the plebiscite question needs to be really simple.

Another concern that I have is that if we go to another voting system other than first-past-the-post, it's going to make the voting system more complicated. I can tell you from dealing with the public for over 25 years, what you run into is people get turned off and they say: I'm just not going to bother with it. That's what I'm afraid will happen should you go to – all these systems that you're suggesting are a lot more complicated than first-past-the-post and people just – like, the ordinary public will just get in a mood and they'll say: Sorry.

Prince Edward Island and Canada, unlike many of the European countries, have not gone through many wars and internal strife and therefore we do not have a lot of ethnic and other resulting problems that has caused them to move to other voting systems. Examples are Germany, Italy, and Greece where some of the governments were only lasting a year or less after the Second World War.

Scotland is a very poor example when it comes to using it within your suggestions because Scotland was an independent country. I know this really well because my mother was a Scottish war bride and I used to hear about it. They wanted to go back to being an independent country right off. If she'd still been alive she probably would

have voted in the referendum that came up, if she could have, to go back to an independent country.

The other examples you're using are New Zealand and – especially now, in New Zealand and Australia, the voting systems are mandatory. If you don't vote you pay a \$20 fine. They go and they pay the \$20 fine and they say nothing. My thoughts are that if you do move to another voting system you've got to look at mandatory voting.

Rather than move away from first-past-the-post, why not give the candidates and the parties sufficient funds so that they will be on equal footing with the other parties when they run for election?

That's what happened with – why the NDP ended up in Ottawa in the last election with such a large majority because Chretien had given them funds. Now he's cut them off and they have less funds to operate with. But they had a lot of election funds to operate with and run an election.

We need to elect governments and MLAs based on merit and excellent qualifications, not based on party percentages of the vote because the winner has less than 50% of the vote. You're talking about here: Every vote must count. But the people that spoil the ballots, those votes don't count.

The public needs education on how government works. I hear considerable complaints: The MLAs are crooked, and all this stuff. From my experience being around government, there's absolutely almost no basis for those remarks. I think that there needs to be more education done by the government and the MLAs to educate the public. Whether you do that – say a member has a regular town hall. Every so often Sean Casey does that quite often. He has a town hall here in Charlottetown. You'd be surprised how many people get out to attend those.

This goes way back in my family. I have several concerns about dual ridings, as two different parties could be elected in the same district and therefore smaller majorities or more minorities. When we have more elections with minorities, it's more expensive because you're having elections less than every four years. The other

problem I have with dual ridings is when we had them here on Prince Edward Island if you did not own property you could only vote for one of the two members that were running in the riding. For years my dad and mom could only vote, because they didn't own property, for the one member. They couldn't vote for both members.

We need more polls set up in high schools, at Holland College and UPEI. They really came out in the last federal election because they had the polls in the schools. They were lining up, in fact.

Party policy is another area where the voting public should be given the opportunity of more input. It's usually only the party faithful that have input. Especially the governing party is supposed to open it up so that people can come in and do policy input at their sessions.

Some of the other concerns that I have are as follows. This may wander a little off where you are talking about now. We need to have better behaviour in the Legislature, more respect, less filibustering, complaining, catcalls. If you're sitting in the Legislature, it's a whole lot worse than what you see on t.v. More well-researched suggestions and questions improve the public perspective. A coin toss to decide an election is a lot fairer than the previous method of letting the returning officer, who was usually appointed by that government that had been in power, vote. It's also a whole lot cheaper than ending up calling another election which could end up with the same results. Obviously, if there is a tie in the election, both people are qualified to be that member.

Several longtime residents and electors were not on the – I was a confirmation officer during the last election and we ran into big problems with the fact that there was several residents and electors who were not on the registered voters list, resulting in delays as there was problems also with the returning officers due to lack of training. In one case there was a dual US citizen who had been told by all the previous confirmation officers that she couldn't vote. She was a Canadian, a dual Canadian/US citizen.

Another area I'd like to see addressed is Elections PEI officials need human resources training to be able to ask the

correct questions when there are questions and complaints about election officials as well as the returning officers. They also need training in the related sections involving Criminal Code in Canada, which says that people can go to certain places based on what their duties are. Also, it's covered in the PEI trespassing act.

I am recommending that the deputy returning officers, poll clerks, constables, and confirmation officers should be selected and be given sufficient training at least two to three months before an election is called in order to have better run elections and less last minute problems with no time to deal with them.

Present district election boundaries – I know you have no (Indistinct) on this – are presently in very poor shape, and Janice brought that up today, too. With one district part of another district, one community in one district and the rest of the community in another district, it causes a lot of confusion. Small communities should be all in the same district, and should be in the districts that have similar concerns and industries as was addressed in the 2006 election special commission on election boundaries report. Part of District 23, which is mostly farming area where I live, also includes part of Summerside, which has absolutely no relation to what's going on out in my community.

Thanks for allowing me this opportunity to have input on this very important issue, and I wish you all the best in preparing your report.

Chair: Thank you, Margaret, and thank you for making the road trip to all these meetings over the past –

Margaret MacKay: I've enjoyed it.

Chair: Any questions, folks? Comment, go ahead.

Ms. Sherry: I just want to echo Jordan's comments about your commitment to the process. I'm sure that if anybody from one tip to the other of Prince Edward Island had questions, Margaret, you could certainly help them out. You certainly have been dedicated. If anybody wants to critique the process we've been through I'm sure

Margaret could do a great job, so we appreciate that.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Margaret MacKay: Thank you very much. I think people need to get involved and do input because if you don't address the issues you don't get anything back.

Chair: Thank you.

Roy Johnstone: Good evening.

I'd feel a lot more comfortable if I had brought my fiddle, but I'm not sure whether I'd play a jig or a lament. Maybe we could take a referendum or a poll.

I want to thank the committee and the provincial government for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I guess I'm an engaged citizen, perhaps.

Electoral reform shouldn't be seen in isolation. It should be part of an ongoing revitalization of our democratic institutions. The intent of reform should be to engage the community at large, community groups, businesses, educational institutions, political parties, and ultimately the voters with a view to building a more cooperative, compassionate, and inclusive democracy.

We have many challenges facing our little Island. Some are global in nature, such as climate change; some are provincial in nature, like the growing debt; and some are more community-based such as deteriorating infrastructures and poverty. Developing long-term plans and policies to address these challenges is imperative, and a more inclusive, representative process will serve us better in this work than what we have now.

First-past-the-post serves the interest of the two main parties. It doesn't serve all Islanders. Winner-take-all is fine for horse racing or hockey, and I used to play a lot of hockey, but it is not ideal in an electoral system.

The present first-past-the-post system doesn't give fair representation to voters, it creates lopsided majorities, it leaves voters feeling that their vote doesn't count, and most importantly, it allows serious abuses of electoral privilege and mismanagement of public funds.

Tonight I would like to address three aspects of our present electoral system. Is it fully accountable? Is it representative of differing points of view? And, is it inclusive? I think these are three major aspects that an electoral system should meet, requirements it should meet.

Regarding accountability, I want to quote from a former Progressive Conservative prime minister, and he's talking about Parliament:

If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution the opposition must fearlessly perform its functions, uphold and maintain the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression. It should supervise all expenditures. It finds fault. It suggests amendments. It asks questions and elicits information. It arouses education, educates, and moulds public opinion. It must scrutinize every action by the government and in doing so, present the shortcuts through democratic procedure that governments like to make.

That's the hon. Joe Clark.

To paraphrase, a healthy opposition is critical to a healthy democracy. First-past-the-post produces distorted majorities, sometimes with only one or two MLAs in opposition. I'm sure you've all heard this before but I think it bears repeating.

I want to remind you of some relatively recent election results to demonstrate how first-past-the-post produces a weak opposition. In the 2000 election the Conservatives under Pat Binns gained 26 seats with 58% of the popular vote. The Liberals gained only one seat, one single seat, with 34%, while the NDP with 8% of the total vote gained no seats.

In the 1993 election the Liberals won with 55%. They took 31 seats. The Conservatives, who took 40%, took one seat. The NDP, with 5%, took no seats. In

1989 the Progressive Conservatives ended up with only two seats after taking 36% of the vote. The Liberals took 32 with 60% of the vote.

As Joe Clark has pointed out, you can't have an effective opposition – or at least this is my argument – you can't have an effective opposition with only one or two MLAs. You just won't have the concerted and consistent review of policies and programs that the government is proposing to implement. As the hon. Joe Clark stated, a key element, a crucial element in our democratic system is the idea of vigilance, and it is the opposition which has to provide this role.

I would argue that the Provincial Nominee Program is one very conspicuous example where the proper oversight wasn't implemented. A strong opposition wasn't present and therefore there was no serious review of that program. I would add that a healthy opposition should include representatives from more than one party. If we had a proportional representation system with other parties represented in the Legislature and sitting on legislative committees, the type of collusion that allowed the Provincial Nominee Program to go ahead would have been much more difficult.

Secondly, first-past-the-post is not fully representative. One MLA has argued, in his presentation to this committee, that first-past-the-post is the best system and that an MLA can represent all of the constituents in his riding. Given that often a majority of voters didn't vote for the MLA who was elected, I find it difficult to see how he can actually represent their concerns.

Let's take a hypothetical example, the issue of balanced budgets. In this election case, this hypothetical case, let's suppose the Liberals are against balanced budgets, the Conservatives, the NDP and the Greens are in favour. Does this sound familiar? Just our recent federal election.

For our hypothetical case let's use the results from the 2014 provincial election. The Liberals get a majority with 40% of the vote and are committed to not balancing the budget. How can a Liberal MLA fairly represent the 60% of voters in his constituency who wanted a balanced

budget? He has to toe the party line and vote in favour of increased spending.

In a proportional system, for the governing party to increase spending, they would have to convince at least three MLAs from the other parties to support them. Those voters who wanted a balanced budget – and they represented 60% of the voters – would be fairly represented in this kind of a process.

My third point is that first-past-the-post does not encourage governments that are inclusive with respect to gender and ethnic minority. We've heard both from Jane and from the Latin American Mission Program, much better presentations than what I'm going to give.

Presently of the 27 MLAs in our Legislature only five are women. It's like Jane said. There's a ceiling that's been hit and it's actually dropping back. And I don't believe that there are any members from an ethnic minority sitting in the Legislature now.

Research comparing first-past-the-post and PR electoral systems has shown that PR systems are more effective in addressing the gender and minority imbalance. There are a lot of studies to show that. Jane discussed some of the reasons why that may be.

I also want to briefly discuss the electoral reform process itself. The electoral committee should recognize the need for an educational community-based process discussing the need for electoral change. I think this is a good start.

We need to have Islanders involved in a way that is meaningful for a thoughtful analysis of the problems and their potential solutions. Only then, if deemed necessary, should a referendum be undertaken. In that case a clear question needs to be asked, such as: Do you favour an electoral system where the number of seats is allocated on the basis of the popular vote?

As a second stage, the specifics of the PR system could be developed with further public consultation and education. In posing the referendum question the committee should consider perhaps recommending an undecided category.

We've seen many times now – and the previous speaker just mentioned – proportional representation systems can be confusing and complex and a lot of times people just don't understand them. So why not put in an undecided category? This would be useful in determining how many confirmed voters there are and it could be used in evaluating whether a majority of the committed voters was actually achieved.

In summary, I believe the present electoral system has to be reformed. Lopsided majorities with their concomitant lack of effective opposition fail to protect the public good. As well, first-past-the-post does not produce legislatures that are fully representative or inclusive.

We have much to celebrate here on Prince Edward Island but, as I mentioned, we have many challenges ahead. Reinvigorating our democratic institutions through electoral reform will help make the process of dealing with these challenges more inclusive, more accountable, and more equitable.

Thank you.

So now, do you want a jig or a lament?

Chair: Any questions, folks? Questions?

Roy Johnstone: I know it's late, and you've heard some great presentations.

Chair: Thank you very much, Roy. It was a great presentation.

Roy Johnstone: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Chair: We'll now move on. If there are any presentations or comments from the audience, we would be happy to take them. Please remember that we would ask that you identify yourself if you do wish to make any comments, and lead right in.

Catherine O'Brien: Hi, I'm Catherine O'Brien. I've been here all day and it's been great. It's been wonderful presentations.

One thing that comes to mind – and I know that there's a lot of issues about what system we're looking at. I'm wondering if we could look at just the question of do we want change, and is that even a possibility to even

do a vote? Do you want change, yes or no, before we actually move into the next step.

Another thought that I had was a way that might be interesting to get the public engaged, maybe fun, would be to do mock votes. Do a mock vote for various systems. I was thinking about the presentations that we had today about the three types of electoral systems and we could do it simply like that. We're voting for rabbits and lizards and whatever, but it would be, I think, an interesting way for people to see what the results would be that might help them make their decision.

Chair: Just so everybody knows, too, a question as simple as: Do you favour change or not? could well be part of the plebiscite question. We definitely have heard that. That has been, as an example, in New Zealand part of questions in the past. So it definitely would be one option that would be considered, sometimes in concert with a second part of the question, too.

Yeah, go ahead. Janice wants to make a comment as well.

Ms. Sherry: Just that it has been a great evening. I'm sure all of my colleagues here at the table have experienced or taken in a lot of information by some very passionate Islanders. That's what these public consultations are all about.

But one thing I wanted to especially take note of tonight is we had a lot of young people in the audience, and it was very refreshing to see the combination of the ages here this evening. That's what's really important because you guys are the future of the province so it's wonderful to see your young faces and your intensity in paying attention to what's happening here this evening. I just want to say thank you.

Chair: It's funny you say that, Janice. I was thinking to myself a couple of times that nobody's said anything about young people in the Legislature yet, and I'm just waiting for that shoe to drop. Not that I'm trying to bait comments, but – go ahead, sir.

Jake Bartlett: Jake Bartlett, my own opinions.

Democracy only lasts 24 hours. Once the ballots are done the party takes over. That's the opinion of a lot of people, that democracy has a very short life. Although you may vote you probably mightn't be heard again for the next four years. I think we need to change that.

I think, like everybody else over the last six weeks or so, we've probably been asked quite a few questions on the telephone as to how we're going to vote, why we're going to vote, who we're going to vote for, why we won't or everything else, and quite often the choices aren't great because they don't ask the big questions.

Sometimes when I was asked which of these four reasons would I vote, environment wasn't even mentioned, yet it's the one thing that's either going to keep us alive or kill us over the next 50 years. It didn't make the top five anymore. I think we have to look at what are big issues. I think maybe Mr. Weale and the first presenter maybe hit that a little bit as to: Is the way we vote the most important thing or not?

Just to do a little bit of nit-picking here, as far as the preferential ballot or whatever goes, I think it's too complicated the way it's laid out. People said they don't want to waste their vote. If you vote for five people and then they start crossing the people off the bottom, I think you certainly get the impression that you lost your vote if you voted for the last fellow on the bottom.

I would think it would be much better and more easy to explain if they just used the weighted system – five points for first place, four for second, etc. Add them all up and you've got the answer right off the bat before you have to start dropping people off the bottom of the ballot.

No matter which method you propose they've got to be simpler than what I think is written out there. One of them really didn't say how they're going to do it. The single transferable vote said there's many different ways. I think you got to tie it down to one way or the other. If you have a referendum, I think your referendum has to be on a preferential ballot, not a first-past-the-post ballot on the referendum.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bartlett.

Any questions? Comments?

Irwin Judson: My name is Irwin Judson and I come in here totally uneducated, I hope, to think with an open mind.

But after listening to the presentations – this is my first one to attend – my first and only thought, I think, reinforces what I've believed for years. The media have always used talking to a premier or a minister: Now that you're in power, are you going to do this, that or the other thing? No, I didn't elect you for power, I elected you for service and collegiality.

My only point is at this point, where they're coming down too hard in any direction at all, is that the various options so far that have been presented might lead us a bit more toward collegiality than the first-past-the-post.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Judson.

I'd like to, while we're moving along, just recognize the hon. Richard Brown over here. We're in Richard's territory today so I'd like to thank him for hosting us.

Claire Byrne: Hello, I'm Claire Byrne. I have two things to mention. I'm in the electoral reform class at UPEI. One thing that we've kind of touched on throughout the semester, like, talking about different electoral systems, is there always seems to be a lot of need for change when the electorate is kind of tired, right? Then a party runs on campaign promises to change or to have some sort of electoral reform and then the momentum just kind of stops.

I think it's really important, if this is something that you campaigned on, to dedicate yourselves to the whole process. I know this part, community engagement, is super important, but I think we also have to think about moving forward like we are. There has to be some sort of promise for change just on the basis that it was campaigned on, and it's something that clearly, I think, the electorate wants.

The second thing that I want to mention is we kind of have to identify a problem before we can present any type of solution, right? Is it that we don't feel that we're represented? Or is it that we need more engagement? Or is that we want a more diversified Legislative Assembly? I think that before we are kind of presented a plebiscite question we kind of have to identify: What are we trying to address?

That's all I have to say.

Chair: Questions or comments?

Thank you.

The gentleman in the back there, Joanne.

Gerry Hopkirk: I would just like to ask the question: If we were to go worldwide and ask people – we're looking for inclusive, open representative government for a group of people, 146,000, in a pastoral setting on an island, I doubt if anyone would say: Here's what you need. You need a premier, cabinet ministers, departments, legislative committees, deputy ministers, senior directors, directors, policy analysts, scores of committees, and more technology than a small country.

I don't think that would be our answer. The difference between Prince Edward Island and every other province in Canada is that we could be different if we had the energy and the courage, and I think we have both, and somehow that has to be represented in these talks.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Gerry.

Anybody else? Once, twice, three times.

Thank you very much for coming out – oh, sorry.

Jim O'Leary: I'm on, hi. Hi, Trevor.

My name is Jim O'Leary. I'm not a member of any sort of committee or organization or special interest group. I just have a comment on the format of this evening. It's my first time coming to these events.

I think it favours special interest groups to get up and give their speech. I think it's better if the format had a spot earlier in the evening before the fatigue set in where people could say something who just turn up like I did, or who are not part of a – obviously, I feel a little uncomfortable that everybody presenting – a lot of the people, I shouldn't say everybody – seem to know each other on a first-name basis.

(Indistinct) you get all of this information, but they're only coming from a very narrow sphere of people who have been politically involved maybe for years and have an axe to grind, whereas some people are just turning up and they want to be engaged, but at 10:30 p.m. or whatever time you're eventually going to end people leave, etc., and there's no space for people like me who turn up who are engaged but aren't just part of a society of sorts.

I also think some sort of moderator to keep people at some time limit might be practical. It says 15 minutes for a presentation and a lot of them went over, etc. I think the longer the evening goes it becomes harder to stay involved and to hear all the messages. I know I burned out about a half hour ago. Anyway, I'd like to see the format change a little bit, especially if you come back after the sitting and you're going to do more (Indistinct), and in theory, as it gets closer, you're going to a lot more people. I think you need to make more space for people just to stand up in an old-school town meeting style and say: I don't agree, blah-, blah, blah, without necessarily having paper in front of them or presentations or pictures or all this sort of smoke and mirrors for the message sort of thing.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Jim.

I should ask, too, you had a comment that you made to me earlier tonight. Do you want to make it now?

Jim O'Leary: No pictures, no Facebook.

The question I had, which is related, I'd like to see attached to this somehow if it moves forward, is I think the province – if you're going to make this sort of big change, and this is obviously a huge change, I think you

should also address the idea of whether permanent residents can vote on the municipal or provincial level. My partner is a permanent resident. Since the last immigration laws changed it'll be probably two more years before she can even apply to be a citizen, which means she probably won't even be able to vote in the next election the way it's going unless Justin somehow hires a million people to do all of the stuff that's going on, the immigrants – the status, you know what I'm trying to say – the applications. That's the word.

I've lived in Europe for many years and I could vote in local elections because I paid my taxes. Once I had a social insurance number – the equivalent of that – they were happy to let me vote in the local and city elections. I couldn't vote in the national EU elections, but that was less relevant to me at the time before I was a citizen. But my partner, she pays taxes, a lot of taxes. She gives a lot to the community. She's in the health care system. She feels like she's doing everything but she can't have a say. I'm not saying she necessarily, until she gets her citizenship, the national vote – that's a bigger question, that's something at the federal level – but I know the province does have the power to change the legislation for local, municipal, provincial.

All right, that's my speech.

Chair: Thank you, Jim.

Any questions or comments, folks? No?

Travis Gordon: (Indistinct). Hi folks. My name is Travis Gordon. I'm also in the electoral reform class so I'll be presenting tomorrow.

I would just like to add my voice to that question which I think should be examined, the question – because it is provincial legislation – of whether the province should extend the option to municipalities for permanent residents to be able to vote. I just wanted to quickly get that on the record. I also support the province putting that question to municipalities.

Thanks.

Chair: Thank you.

Comments or questions?

Isaac Mazer: Hi, my name is Isaac Mazer. I actually just moved here about three days ago from Kingston, Ontario after spending my first 18 years here, born and raised.

I just wanted to say coming from a place where I spent eight years, which is purely a student town, I think I did the calculation where there was about 70,000 to 75,000 students. Yeah, the turnout for the youth vote was very drastically high and I thought that was great. I just wanted to say thank you very much for saying something about that and thank you very much for having these panels because in Kingston they did not exist. There was a lot of smoke and mirrors when it comes to a lot of different things with the fourth crossing and extensions on certain streets, they would blow out a lot of – not a lot, but major communities that had been there for many years – and everything from building a mega-school that would close down three high schools that had been there for 100-plus years. It was just a lot of smoke and mirrors.

Thank you very much for putting this together, for the educational aspect to it. It's been said before: I came here with an open mind, very little knowledge based on this, considering I just got back here a few days ago. This is great, so thank you very much for doing this. That's it, so thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Okay. Anybody else?

Once, twice, three times, gone.

Thank you very much again for coming out today and this evening.

I should mention, too, just to Jim's point, you can submit comments or presentations or whatever online. Our website is assembly.pe.ca/democraticrenewal. These little manila cards are available around the room. Feel free to grab one. It's got all the information on it.

Thank you, everyone. We hope to see you again soon.

The Committee adjourned