

April 28: Citizens' assemblies are a better system

Re: "Proportional representation bid falls short," April 24.

The results of the recent referendum on electoral reform in Prince Edward Island reminded me again that our democracy is broken.

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It's broken because corporations have too much influence on governments and their policies, as exemplified by the SNC-Lavalin debacle, and because our news media must, for the most part, depend on corporate advertising for their existence.

There is a way our democracy can be less influenced by corporations. We can make more use of citizens' assemblies.

A citizens' assembly is about as perfect a system of democracy as can be imagined in an imperfect world.

- Members of the assembly are chosen at random from the voting population. They are therefore more representative of voters than any elected politician.
- Assembly members become informed through weeks or months of study.
- To date, assemblies have been asked: "What electoral system would be best for the province?" An assembly could also consider questions of taxation, immigration or almost any other policy matter.
- Assembly members receive no personal recognition or power, and are therefore difficult to corrupt.

Every citizens' assembly or committee that has studied electoral reform so far has recommended we adopt some form of proportional representation.

Every referendum that has been held so far has had its positive conclusion ruled unacceptable by government, or the referendum failed because of biased reporting.

Our democracy is broken. It could be repaired, at least partly, if governments relied more on citizens' assemblies, and then accepted the assemblies' conclusions.

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Victoria

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