

Finally, given that we believe it is necessary to increase the western provinces' share of seats in the Senate, it follows that the share of other provinces would be reduced. As a result, Canada's francophone community, which is located primarily in Quebec, could feel more vulnerable. We therefore propose a new voting procedure to enable senators representing that community to vote separately on any linguistic proposal of special interest to it.

The components of our model for an elected Senate are described in the pages that follow. For each we list the principal options and explain our choice. We emphasize that the components of our model are interdependent. Considered alone, each has its drawbacks, but taken together we believe they would produce a strong Senate able to represent regional interests without undermining the system of responsible government that we enjoy in this country.

### **The electoral system**

The Committee had to choose between a majority system and proportional representation — that means, in practice, between single- and multi-member constituencies.

Proportional representation is the system used to elect the Australian Senate and most western European legislatures. Essentially, it gives each political party a number of parliamentary seats corresponding roughly to the percentage of votes cast for it. Witnesses advocated two systems of proportional representation: the *single transferable vote* system used in Australia and in Ireland and a *list system* based on the European model. Witnesses advocating proportional representation argued that the present plurality vote system (also called first-past-the-post) has resulted in a lack of regional balance in parliamentary caucuses and that minority parties in each region win few seats, if any. The present system can and does result in one of the major federal parties failing to elect a single member in any given region of Canada, which makes it impossible to constitute a fully representative federal cabinet. Proportional representation, on the other hand, would have enabled the major parties to elect candidates in all regions of the country had it been the system in use at recent elections. Some witnesses also argued that the Senate should have an electoral system different from that of the House of Commons so as to emphasize the distinction between the two houses. Finally, in a system of proportional representation, senators would be elected in constituencies the size of the provinces, and that would add to their prestige.

Opponents of proportional representation argue that if the system were used for Senate elections—and even more, if it were used for elections to the House of Commons—it would facilitate the emergence of purely regional parties. Such a development would undermine the national parties, which help to integrate and soften regional differences. Conflict between purely regional parties could increase regional tensions.

We have been impressed by this argument and have concluded that Senate reform should not stray from its true objective or serve to resolve a representation problem for which the political parties have only themselves to blame. In other words, if parties are incapable of electing members in a particular province, they should pull themselves