

devise an institution that had neither too much nor too little power. If it had too much, the government would, in effect, be responsible to both houses. If it had too little, the new institution would not be taken seriously.

They argue further that it is unlikely that an elected Senate would be non-partisan, given that senators would need party support to get elected. To the extent that senators were bound by party discipline, much of the purpose of Senate reform would be defeated, because the Senate would come to resemble the House of Commons in everything but the distribution of seats. On the other hand, if senators were completely non-partisan, other problems could arise: senators might take too little account of national concerns or trade their support for parochial interests.

Opponents of an elected Senate also argue that such an institution is outside Canadian experience and that the effects of introducing it are unpredictable. They believe that the Australian experience, far from supporting the option of direct election, has revealed serious problems.

Finally, they argue that it will be difficult to get the necessary approval for constitutional amendments, and that the public is weary of constitutional disputes.

Those who favour an elected Senate and those who oppose it both recognize that a good deal would depend on how the institution is designed: the electoral system, the timing of elections, the term of senators, the legislative powers, and the distribution of seats. It seems to us that a major difference between the two sides is that those who favour an elected Senate believe that it is possible to achieve balance between too much and too little power for the Senate, and between too much and too little party influence over senators. Those who oppose an elected Senate doubt that this balance is possible and are opposed to introducing such a change because the outcome is uncertain.

Most members of the Committee consider, however, that the two most likely alternatives to direct election — a reformed appointment process and indirect election — would not give the Senate sufficient political authority; therefore they would not give the people of the less populous provinces a stronger voice or provide effective protection for Canada's French-speaking minority.

We conclude that direct election would best meet the reform objectives we set out in Chapter 4 and that a carefully designed elected Senate would achieve the necessary balance we have described. Our proposed model for an elected Senate, which has the support of most members of the Committee, is described in the next chapter.