

We realize that senators who serve for a single term would not be obliged to account for their actions to their electors at a subsequent election. But senators, like all elected and even many appointed officials, are accountable in a variety of ways to the people they serve. Quite apart from their own motivation, there are many different social and party pressures on them to do a good job. We believe that these pressures will tend to ensure that senators who are elected for a single term will not abuse the trust of those who vote for them. We acknowledge that if the Senate had as much power as the Commons the question of re-election would assume relatively more importance. With a suspensive veto the accountability problem, while important, is less critical. On balance, therefore, we believe that the advantages of a single term outweigh the disadvantages.

It was difficult to decide how long the single term should be. Most witnesses recommended a term of six years, without any restriction on senators running for a second or subsequent term. This is the arrangement in the United States and Australia. We decided that if candidates were to be restricted to a single term, the term would have to be long enough to attract good candidates. Our preference for nine years is to allow for continuity in the Senate. With senators serving just a single term, it is important that the turnover not be too rapid. For example, if half the senators serving a six-year term were elected every three years, after any given election a maximum of half the senators would have only three years' experience in the chamber. We therefore decided to recommend a nine-year term, with one-third of the senators being elected every three years. The longer term would have the additional advantage of giving senators more independence and enough time for them to learn to be effective in their role as legislators and regional representatives.

Our recommendation to renew part of the Senate every three years follows the system used for the Senates of the United States, Australia and France. Because we would be using single-member constituencies, voters in only one-third of the constituencies in each province would be called to the polls at each triennial election. (For the territories we are recommending a number of seats that would not be divisible by three, so for them there would be special provisions.)

These triennial elections should be held separately from Commons elections and on fixed dates — for example, on the second Monday of March in every third year. A number of witnesses recommended that Commons and Senate elections be held simultaneously, with half the Senate being elected at each Commons election. They pointed out that this would result in fewer elections and could produce a higher voter turnout. One disadvantage of half-Senate elections for our model is that a senator's single term could be too short in that it would be limited to two parliaments; and it could be too long if one-third were elected at each Commons election to sit for three parliaments. But we had other objections. The Senate election campaign would be overshadowed by a simultaneous campaign whose primary object was to elect a government. Also, the power to dissolve Parliament would give the government a certain measure of control over the Senate. We believe that senators would have more independence, and more authority as regional representatives, if their elections were separate. Moreover, separate elections could well increase the chances of candidates without party affiliation running successfully. While affiliation with parties will be natural, it should not be the only way of getting elected.