

should have significant powers, but it should not be able to undermine Canada's well-tried system of responsible government. We therefore propose that the new Senate be given only a suspensive veto, which would allow time for national debate and reflection, but which the Commons could, after a suitable lapse of time, override by re-passing the legislation in question.

We also propose that every effort be made to ensure that senators have a significant degree of independence of party. Only then will they be able to speak in favour of local and regional interests without having to be concerned primarily, as members of Parliament must be, with adhering to party policy. A healthy measure of independence is therefore essential if the Senate is to fill its role of regional representation. This does not mean that senators would lose sight of the needs of the country as a whole.

It is for this reason, and also to distinguish senators from members of the House of Commons, we propose that senators be elected for a single but comparatively long term — nine years — with one-third of the senators being elected every three years. To lessen party influence in the choice of senators, all but one of us prefer 'first-past-the-post' elections in single-member constituencies to proportional representation in multi-member constituencies. Each province would be divided into as many constituencies as it had senators.

We recognize that, in the absence of proportional representation for an elected Senate, the political parties will have to work hard to achieve balanced representation from across the country in the Commons and the Senate. This is as it should be. In striving to do this, they will have to adapt their policies accordingly, and this can only benefit national politics.

On the question of the distribution of seats, the Committee was advised by nearly all witnesses across Canada that the division should be made not on the basis of the present four Senate regions but by allocating seats to each province and territory. We accept that this kind of allocation reflects more closely the diverse nature of Canada.

As to how many seats should be allocated to each province or territory, we recognize that there is no perfect solution. We believe that giving an equal number of seats to each province would not be appropriate, having regard to Canada's historical development and the configuration of its population. If each province had the same number of seats, five provinces with as little as 13.4 per cent of Canada's population would have a majority of seats if they had the support of the territories.

While the less populous provinces merit a stronger voice in Parliament, equal representation in the Senate would tilt the balance too far and would be unacceptable to the vast majority of Canadians, not only to those living in the two largest provinces. We therefore propose a compromise whereby most provinces would have an equal number of seats, but Ontario and Quebec would have more and Prince Edward Island and the territories would have fewer. Our proposal would, for example, give the four western provinces together as many seats as Ontario and Quebec jointly. We believe that most Canadians would agree that our proposed distribution, or something close to it, represents a fair solution.