



# Communiqué



**Ron Gray** – Leader of the Christian Heritage Party



888-868-3247  
www.chp.ca

Box 4958, Station E Ottawa ON K1S 5J1 \* E-mail: NationalOffice@chp.ca

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## Let's have FULL electoral reform—NOW

It's good news (although it's not yet official as I write this) that the Tories and the NDP have reached an agreement to support fixed federal election dates. The proposed plan would follow the pattern of BC and Ontario, where defeat of a government would still precipitate an election, but no Prime Minister could trigger an election just because the polls looked good.

Prime Minister Harper is also likely to embrace some sort of Senate reform — but all he's committed himself to is appointing only senators who have been elected in their provinces. Only Alberta has elected senators-in-waiting.

Those are small steps in the direction of badly-needed reforms. But why not bite the bullet and go for full parliamentary and electoral reform?

Here's what the CHP would like to see:

- Adopt the proposal of the Law Commission of Canada, released in March, 2004, for Mixed Member Proportional Representation, with 2/3 of the seats in the House of Commons elected as now, and 1/3 appointed from pre-election party lists, so that the final distribution of seats reflects the share of the overall vote won by each party. This would, as the title of the Law Commission report states, *Make Every Vote Count*.

- Allow provinces to decide whether their senators should be elected or appointed; and if appointed, by the provincial legislature, not by the Prime Minister.

- Seat senators by region, not by party affiliation,

- Election financing should be focused in the voters, not on the interests of the political parties; it should respect the need — and *right* — of voters to have adequate access to information about all options available to them.

Instead of the regressive, backward-looking \$1.79 per year for every vote gained in the previous election — a naked formula for preserving the status quo, rammed through by the Chrétien Liberals — let each taxpayer decide who will get his or her money. Income Tax forms should have a box that says: “Two dollars of your taxes will be used to support the democratic electoral system; you may designate which registered party will get your \$2. If no party is designated, your \$2 will go into an education fund to teach students and New Canadians how Canada's electoral system works.”

That way, not a cent of any taxpayer's money could be sent to a party whose policies that taxpayer opposed. And taxpayers would be able to give the parties in the House a “report card” between elections.

- Finally, apart from cabinet ministers, major government appointments — Supreme Court judges, ambassadors, commissioners of public bodies, etc. — should be taken out of the Prime Minister's hands, and made by Parliamentary Committees.