

Renewing Democracy Project - Representation and Governance

Request for Proposals

LCC 02-089

As part of its *Renewing Democracy* project, the Law Commission of Canada is seeking proposals for research that examine issues relating to representation in Canada's system of democratic governance.

Background

On October 22, 2002, the Law Commission of Canada released *Renewing Democracy: Debating Electoral Reform in Canada*, a discussion paper on electoral reform. In the document the Commission notes that representation is an important concept that has multiple meanings and implications for our system of democratic governance. For some, representation is an important element of our current system in that Canadians elect representatives under a single member plurality system (one representative per constituency). For others, traditional conceptions of representation create roadblocks to allowing a diversity of people and perspectives to be represented in government. The purpose of this research is to examine notions of representation as they relate to our system of democratic governance.

In Canada, we vote to confer upon an individual or individuals the ability to make decisions on behalf of others – people are elected to represent. Traditional notions of representation focus on the importance of constituency (geographic) representation, including whether Parliament or a provincial legislature equitably represents certain regions or provinces, and whether there is a clear line of accountability between constituents and their representative. Increasingly, however, many observers argue that territorial constituencies are not as cohesive and stable as they once were, when boundaries remained constant and populations were relatively stable and homogenous (although there is some debate if constituencies ever actually possessed the characteristics).

In recent years, debates about representation have broadened to include the growing need of representation as it relates to non-territorial groups (for example, women, minority groups and Aboriginal peoples) as well as a diversity of ideas and interest in Parliament and legislatures. Contemporary Canadian society is characterized by a highly diverse and mobile society in which many citizens identify themselves, not only as residents of a certain area, but also as members of other kinds of communities, such as environmentalists, women, Francophone living outside Quebec or Aboriginal peoples. Many critics suggest the current system of democratic governance needs to be changed to reflect evolving notions of representation in contemporary society. They argue it is unreasonable for our system of governance to remain static while society – including its understanding of representation – changes. Some observers suggest there is an increasing gap between how our governments operate and how Canadians experience their daily

lives. This ‘representation gap’ raises important questions concerning the meaning of representation in contemporary Canadian society and whether the current system of democratic governance adequately reflects our democratic aspirations.

Objective

The purpose of this research is to examine issues relating to representation in our contemporary system of governance. The Commission seeks a researcher who will examine the various meanings of representation and their implications for our system of democratic governance.

Issues and questions to be addressed may include the following:

- What does representation mean in contemporary Canadian society? What are the multiple meanings of representation as it relates to our system of governance?
- Does our current system of democratic governance reflect these notions of representation? Does the notion of representation remain important for our system of democratic governance?
- Can the concept of representation be used as a vehicle to promote civic engagement? What does it mean to have a representative government that is accountable and provides an effective voice in governing? What is the relationship between the concepts of representation and good governance?
- What factors (e.g., political, cultural, socio-economic) are important for promoting the representation of diverse groups and ideas?
- How might our system of democratic governance be changed to better reflect contemporary notions of representation? What are the barriers to accommodating different notions of representation?
- Is the notion of one representative per constituency a useful way to structure our system of governance? Might there be other ways to broadly represent a diversity of people and ideas?

These questions are not meant to be exhaustive, but, rather, offer an example of the range of issues that might arise in examining issues relating to representation and governance.

Scope of the Work

Researchers may wish to adopt one or more of the following research methods and sources:

- A review of the literature (e.g., academic, government and non-governmental articles and reports) concerning representation as it relates to democratic governance.
- Comparative analyses of the meaning of representation and how it is employed in other jurisdictions.
- Interviews with various constituencies.
- An analysis of existing empirical data relating to representation and governance in Canada.

Proposals must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the issues associated with democratic governance, including issues relating to electoral reform. In adhering to the philosophy of the Law Commission, a multidisciplinary research method is encouraged.

The Law Commission of Canada is an independent federal agency committed to engaging Canadians in the renewal of the law to ensure that it is relevant, responsive, effective, equally accessible to all, and just. In pursuing its research agenda, the Commission focuses on developing new approaches to law reform and stimulating critical debate about how the law operates in Canada.

Deliverables and Timetable

The contractor must provide the Law Commission with the following deliverables by the accompanying fixed deadlines:

- Rough outline by April 15, 2003;
- Detailed outline and work in progress by May 30, 2003;
- First draft by June 30, 2003;
- Final report by July 30, 2003.

Budget Guideline

The total budget for the proposed research project should be within the range of \$15,000 - \$18,000. The proposal must include a breakdown of fees for professional services (including research assistance, if any) and administrative expenses or institutional overhead.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Congruence with the objectives of this request for proposals;
- Articulation of the research methodologies to be used;
- Budget and rationale;
- Professional qualifications and relevant expertise.

Submission

The deadline for submitting proposals is **3:00 pm E.S.T., February 24, 2003**. All candidates are requested to provide the following materials:

- A covering letter highlighting the candidate's qualifications and experience, outlining why the candidate is interested in undertaking this research for the Law Commission, and how the research proposed would support the objectives of this request for proposals and respond to the scope and type of work envisioned.
- A résumé (maximum 3 pages) for the principal researcher(s).
- A work plan (maximum five pages) that includes an outline of the research methodology/methodologies proposed, steps and/or stages required to complete the assignment, and precise estimates of the time and resources to be dedicated to the assignment.

Proposals should be addressed to Ms. Jocelyne Geoffroy, Senior Administration and Financial Services Officer, and sent:

By mail or courier: Law Commission of Canada
473 Albert Street, 11th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8

By fax: (613) 946-8988