Creation of a Debates Commission for the 2019 Leaders’ Debates

Objectives

- Open and transparent organization of leaders’ debates in the public interest
- Phased approach: 2019 experience to inform creation of a permanent entity post-2019

Debates Commission

Selection Criteria

- One decision maker:
  - Eminent Canadian, politically impartial, and well respected across the Canadian population
  - Experience sought in broadcasting/journalism; leaders’ debates; and/or building relationships across political parties

- Seven members nominated by Commissioner:
  - Reflect regional representation, gender balance, and Canadian diversity
  - Have experience in journalism, politics, broadcasting, or accessibility
  - Aim to include statespersons (e.g. former politicians from across the political spectrum) to bring experience and gravitas

Rationale

- Government and Parliamentary consultations revealed that:
  - Leaders’ debates make an essential contribution to the health of Canadian democracy
  - There is a need to bring the public interest squarely into debate negotiations
  - There is broad support for and value in the creation of a Debates Commission

Mandate

- Organize two leaders’ debates for the 2019 election (one in each official language)
- Issue a call for proposals with clear evaluation criteria to produce leaders’ debates
- Consider the interests of Canadians, including minority groups
- Provide free of charge the feed for debates it organizes
- Work to ensure broad debate distribution across multiple platforms
- Report to Parliament outlining findings, lessons learned and recommendations
- Work to negotiate terms of debates with political parties

Timeline

- Fall 2018: Appointment of Commissioner
- Spring 2019: Commission fully operational
- Sept/Oct 2019: Leaders’ Debates for 43rd General Election
- March 2020: Report to Parliament
- Winter 2020: Policy development to inform a "built-to-last" Debates Commission

Phase 1

- Engages with Canadians, stakeholders, media and political parties
- Convenes meetings with Advisory Board
- Develops approach to ensuring a high quality of debates
- Issues a call for proposals for production of debates and selects winning bid
- Makes Canadians aware of debates
- Ensures broad media distribution

Phase 2

- Government brings forward approach for a permanent Debates Commission

Policy development to inform a "built-to-last" Debates Commission

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