Government of Canada
Privy Council Office

Gouvernement du Canada
Bureau du Conseil privé

Canada

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

Debates Commissioner

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

Advisory Board

Selection Criteria

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

Fall 2018 — Appointment of Commissioner

Spring 2019 — Commission fully operational

Debates Commissioner:

- 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

Sept/Oct 2019 — Leaders' Debates for 43rd General Election

March 2020 — Report to Parliament

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

Winter 2020 — Government brings forward approach for a permanent Debates Commission

Phase 1

Phase 2