

GARY ANANDASANGAREE
SCARBOROUGH-ROUGE PARK

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

GARY ANANDASANGAREE
SCARBOROUGH-ROUGE PARK

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

CONSULTATION

Date(s) of the Meeting(s)	Time and Length (start time and end time)	Location of Consultation	Total Number of People in Attendance (you may indicate the number of volunteers and employees who assisted with the meeting)
October 14 th , 2016	6:00-8:00PM	Heron Park Community Centre 292 Manse Road Scarborough, Ontario M1E 3V4	67

Form: Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation
Presentation was distributed to participants
 Presentation from the MP's office
*MP Mark Holland, Parliamentary Secretary for Democratic Institutions +
 MP Gary Anandasangaree presented to the Town Hall*
 Open microphone
 Question and answer session
Time allocated at the end for questions and answers
 Guest speaker:
*MP Mark Holland, Parliamentary Secretary for Democratic Institutions
 Jane Macdonald, Fair Vote Canada*
 Other (please specify):
*Participants were split into smaller groups for round table discussion. Participants were
 also given additional feedback forms.*

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)

Voting systems: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Replacement of the current voting system: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Voter turnout: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility and inclusiveness: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory voting: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Online voting: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local representation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify and describe below)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What did participants say about the current system for electing Members of Parliament (benefits/flaws)? Did participants feel that their votes are fairly translated? (suggested limit: 500 words)

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
 131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
 Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

Participants had mixed feelings regarding the current First Past the Post system for electing Members of Parliament and government, though the overall consensus appeared to be somewhat negative. The primary benefit of the current system is its simplicity. Participants felt the current 'winner-take-all' system allows for 'things to be done faster' thereby allowing government agenda to move forward with limited scrutiny. Some felt the current system has been working and does not need to be changed. The current system also allows local constituents to have a direct relationship with their MPs and allows an element of individual accountability of the MP.

Conversely, participants also highlighted in the current system, MPs are often seen as the voice of the party instead of the constituents' voice in Ottawa. Participants also stressed that the current system enables one party to be given 100% of the power, despite only obtaining a fraction of the popular vote, in most cases under 40%. Participants highlighted the inequity of having parties that, for example receive approximately 30% of votes, yet form majority governments. Participants did not feel the current system is proportionate of the diverse political views of all Canadians, as reflected in recent federal elections. It was suggested the current system may be more effective when there are 2 parties versus a multitude of political parties. The current system does not allow for smaller political parties to be represented in the House of Commons, although some receive significant numbers of votes. The exercise of strategic voting is seen as a resulting flaw of the current system. Individuals mentioned they sometimes feel they are unable to vote for the candidate or party they prefer because it would be a 'wasted ballot'. A number of individuals also highlighted the issue of dissonance when wanting to vote for a party but not the local candidate and vice-versa. The current system sometimes forces individuals to vote for unwanted local candidates for the sake of the party, or unwanted party for the sake of the local candidate.

Overall, as the discussion progressed, there was a sense the current system did not allow for votes to be fairly translated. Power distribution, local and federal representation, and variety of political views were cited as factors.

Which alternatives to the current system were discussed? Did participants identify specific features that are important to them in an electoral system (for example local representation, proportionality, simplicity, legitimacy etc.)? (suggested limit: 500 words)

While the 5 major electoral systems (First Past the Post, Alternative Vote, List Proportional, Single Transferable, and Mixed Member Proportional) were discussed, there was a general preference towards Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) as an alternative to the current model.

The positive aspects of the MMPR were:

- (a) Voters can choose between the strengths of the individual candidates with local priorities rather than by voting for the party alone.
- (b) Allows for greater diversity of parties and candidates to be elected.
- (c) More proportional to represent the issues of concerns to Canadians across the board, especially under represented communities. It was discussed as the best option to represent minority groups and to engage and empower Canada's First Peoples
- (d) Makes for more positive campaigns based on individual merits, and likely deters negative campaign practices.
- (e) Proportional representation might work better for diverse countries like Canada

Despite these positive aspects, several concerns were identified:

- (a) Too many options might make it confusing for voters.
- (b) Fringe groups will be better positioned to gain traction with this system. Example, rise of the far right in France.

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

Did participants discuss why they feel many Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process? Did they suggest ways to encourage participation? (suggested limit: 500 words)

The need to outreach and engage youth were brought up by several participants and was a key theme throughout the discussion. It was conceded that there is a general disconnect with the election process and youth.

There is a need to engage youth in the political process and incorporate new technology and platforms as an important tool to increasing voter participation. Civic engagement of youth was encouraged. Youth cabinet / youth councils were seen a viable tools, and it was requested that more community organizations and groups are engaged to reach out to wider groups of youth.

There is a need to educate voters of all ages and to instill a sense of civic responsibility in them. More education on the methods and means of voting, information about candidates and parties, and the major issues in each election were highlighted. One way to achieve this is through incorporating new technologies that will have a wider reach and be accessible to more Canadians. Need for education was unanimously supported by all.

Some participants pointed out that youth are sometimes not interested in politics or the election process when framed in partisan ways, but when individual issues are brought up, such as infrastructure, health care etc. politics became more relevant. There is a need to connect voting to current needs of individuals, particularly young people, in order make their vote have real meaning to their lives.

It was felt that Elections Canada could expand their role in engaging voters.

A lack of gender parity (or genuine attempts at it) was brought up as an issue that needs to be addressed with the highest of priority. One person highlighted the need to engage newcomers and equity seeking communities as an issue.

There was a desire to have residents more involved in selecting candidates for each party.

Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

Most participants felt that mandatory voting does not address the core issues around the lack of voter engagement. The low voter turnout in Canada is seen as a combination of lack of civic engagement, apathy, and general frustration that an individual vote does not matter. The citizen's choice not to vote was seen by some as a political statement in and of itself, as opposed to voter apathy.

Some participants strongly felt voters should be inspired to vote by the electoral process, rather than being mandated to. The focus should be on expanding methods of voting (i.e. online) or actual reform. For some, implementing fines for those who did not vote would penalize individuals who are already marginalized. This would further alienate and discourage people from voting thereby negatively impacting some communities, and does not bring the desired results of increasing voter turnout. Many felt that the focus should be on civic engagement, and encouraging individuals to make an informed, well-thought decision of who and what to vote for. By forcing people to vote, participants felt that some voters may simply pick candidates blindly and they would ultimately prefer those individuals not vote at all than vote blindly. There were those that mentioned that voting represents the tides of the times, and it may be unrealistic to expect a high voter turn-out if things are 'going well' as opposed to very high turnout if voters are frustrated with the government. On the other hand, some participants felt that it was the responsibility of citizens to go out and vote, and that individuals should be given incentives if mandatory voting was implemented, such

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

as additional time off of work, or a full day off/holiday to encourage people to vote.

Some participants suggested the opportunity for voters to spoil the ballot if mandatory voting was implemented. Overwhelmingly, participants felt that civic engagement, (which some suggested come from Elections Canada), be a focus of encouraging people to vote, instead of forcing people to vote.

Did participants discuss online voting? Did they express a desire to maintain current voting practices? (i.e. presenting themselves at a polling station, vote secrecy etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

Participants expressed interest in online voting to ensure access to those who are not able to leave their homes, making it more accessible (for example individuals with disabilities). Some were concerned about the secrecy of online voting in terms of how it would be done – would individuals be sent a code, where would this code be sent (in the mail, through email), and by using the code to vote, would that code identify who the individual voted for?

There was also concern around online security of the vote and the information that is stored, especially in light of recent data breaches on reputable servers. There is no guarantee with the different levels of security on each individual computer that their votes will be secure. Also, with online voting, without the presence of voting official and scrutineers, it is not known if that individual felt any pressure in how to vote as there would not be anyone present to ensure that there was no pressure or coercion.

The participants also mentioned that online voting may help increase the engagement of youth who are able to vote, and as another option, may increase voter turn-out overall as this would be an easier and more accessible option. It was mentioned that many individual Canadians take advantage of online banking and also filing their taxes online with secure websites, and online voting should not be considered any different.

Were any other major topics raised by the participants? (i.e. referendum, women/minority representation, accessibility, voter turnout etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

A key topic that was mentioned a number of times was the issue of youth engagement. Participants wanted to come up with creative ways to ensure youth were well informed of the voting process and encouraged to participate. The idea of the democratic process incorporating more technologies was highlighted, either for dissemination of information, education, or the process of voting itself.

The number of women represented in government was an area of significant concern. Though women currently make up 52% of the population, we see very few represented in the House of Commons. The current system does not allow for a truly reflective government to be elected. The issue of minority representation was also highlighted in the discussion. Typically concerns of equity seeking groups must be considered when proposing alternatives. For example, the implementation of online voting will be next to impossible to implement for some of our Indigenous population living on reserves where there is very poor internet connectivity.

Many individuals highlighted the importance of increasing the accessibility for voters. Participants felt increasing the accessibility, whether by extending voting hours or periods, increasing mobile voting station, implementing online voting etc., will eliminate barriers to voting and result in increased voter turnout.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS (suggested limit: 1000 words)

The Town Hall on Electoral Reform and Public Consultation undertaken by the Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Rouge Park in conjunction with the West Hill Lion's Club and was held on Friday, October 14, 2016 at Heron Park Community Centre. The Parliamentary Secretary

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

for Democratic Institutions, Mark Holland, was the featured speaker and he introduced the relevant issues to be discussed, as well as the different models under consideration. A representative from Fair Vote Canada was given an opportunity to make submissions at the beginning and towards the end of the town hall. After the overview presented by Mark Holland, the participants were separated into five groups of approximately 12 people for roundtable discussion. After the discussion, all the participants reconvened, and each of the group presented their findings to the larger group. Once the five groups presented, the floor was open to individuals to make submissions. The contents of this report are a result of this Town Hall, and a summary of major issues discussed are highlighted in this section.

(a) Current System: First Past the Post

The current First Past the Post (FPP) system, while having some merits, does not produce fair electoral outcomes that reflect the will of Canadian voters. As a result, there is a need to look at other options while ensuring that local representation of some form be continued.

(b) Mixed Member Proportionate Representation

While consideration was given to all systems, Mixed Member Proportionate Representation appeared to have greater consensus as an alternative model. There are many different variations to this system, but the general guiding principle appear to be to have some form of local representation with a number of seats that will reflect the voter's diverse opinions.

(c) Engagement of the Political Process

Young people are particularly not engaged in the political process in relation to their proportion of the population. Many issues were discussed to improve this, however, the increased use of technology and greater flexibility of any system was highlighted.

(d) Mandatory Voting

There was general agreement for the need to increase voter turnout and participation during and outside elections. However, mandatory voting was not seen as serving this purpose. There was general consensus that greater civic engagement was important to increase voter turnout and engagement.

(e) Online Voting

Canadians have adopted to new technology with relative ease, be it in online banking or in other commercial engagements. There continues to be concern over the security of any online voting methods, the integrity of the secret ballot, protection from coercion, and forms of scrutiny that would exist in an online model. While highlighting serious concerns, online voting is seen as allowing greater access to young people and those with mobility challenges.

(f) A Parliament that reflects Canada

The current system has not facilitated the different faces of Canada to be reflected in our Parliament. Of particular significance is the lack of women in elected office. Even though women make up over 52% of the population, they comprise a fraction of that number as MPs. Any system that is introduced needs to address this issue in a substantive way. The same challenges exist for many equity seeking groups, and these structural barriers need to be cleared for our Parliament to have a truer reflection of Canada.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: OCT 11/2016

MP's signature:

GARU ANANDASANGA RE
(Name)

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

Reports must be submitted to the Clerks of the Committee no later than Friday, October 14, 2016 in both official languages.

Please note that this document is for illustrative purposes only and can be modified or adapted to your needs. The report will be published on the Committee's web site.

Please return to:

**Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécopieur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca**

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016