

HON. CAROLYN BENNETT
TORONTO-ST. PAUL'S

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



NOM DU (DE LA) HON. CAROLYN
BENNETT
TORONTO-

ST. PAULS

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

CONSULTATION(S)			
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)
1.09-11-2016	3:30pm-5:30pm	Christ Church Deer Park	125
2.			
3.			
4.			
Form: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):			
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) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
<p>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)</p> <p>The majority of constituents feel that the current system for electing Members of Parliament is unfair, and does not represent voter preferences. Some of their main concerns are that the allocation of seats is not a direct reflection of the popular vote. Some voters, and sometimes the majority of voters, may feel that their MP does not represent them or reflect their vote. Many constituents feel that the present system does not align with their vision of what a Canadian democracy should be. Most constituents agree that the FPTP system leads to parties focusing their resources on strategic communities, and it creates divisive politics overall. Constituents feel that</p>

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Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

the current system encourages strategic voting and they would like to see this changed. They raised concerns about the dominance of two major political parties, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. They feel that in order for the system to remain credible, it needs to more accurately reflect the support given to other parties. Those that are pleased with the current electoral process believe it has served Canadians well for decades and is efficient. They believe the current system is fair, simple and rooted in historical precedent. They want the present system to stay in place, as it has served Canada well thus far.

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)

The majority of the constituents stated proportionality is the most important feature in an electoral system. They believe that a more accurate translation of votes to seats would be a truer reflection of democracy and would create transparency in government. Another feature of the electoral system which is important to many constituents is the principle of local representation—when seats are awarded to the political candidate who they really feel will represent them best. Many constituents suggested that in order to achieve this, MPs should only hold a riding's seat when they receive a true majority of the votes. Some constituents suggested transferable votes as an option to achieve this. Many constituents feel that when MP is elected by the majority of voters, they will have a stronger relationship with them. Many recognize that this is difficult to accommodate with a multi-party system; some constituents support MMP as a means to simultaneously achieve both stronger local representation and greater proportionality with seats in the House. While legitimacy and simplicity were stated as important, many constituents agree that creating an effective and fair electoral system is a complex process.

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)

Most constituents feel that many voters do not vote because they feel a sense of apathy towards the government and politics. They also believe that their vote holds very little power in elections. Many feel their votes are wasted with the FPTP system and therefore often choose not to vote. In order to encourage participation, constituents advocated for more civic education programs to be implemented in schools to engage youth and educate them on how to make informed decisions. The point was raised multiple times that people do not vote because they feel they are not properly informed, making the voting process intimidating. Engagement is also a concern that was raised as an area which needs improvement. As a possible solution, many constituents feel that when people witness their MPs reflecting their values and interacting with the community, they are more likely to vote.

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

Many constituents wondered what penalty citizens would face if they did not vote under a mandatory voting system. The majority of constituents are against the idea, and strongly believe that freedom of expression in a democratic country also includes freedom of silence. They are concerned that if voters are forced to engage in elections, the results may be less legitimate due to voting through apathy or ignorance. They believed no country should be governed by the choices of people who are forced to engage in politics, even if spoiling your ballot is an option. They think this makes the democratic process unfair and less meaningful. Those that agreed with mandatory voting referenced democracy in Australia, and hoped to emulate their success in voting. They also stated that this will encourage all generations to be civically active and engaged, in addition to staying informed.

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)

Many constituents are open to an online voting platform as it would engage younger voters to become more involved in politics. They thought this idea was great, as it is more convenient for individuals who are not mobile, but would like their voices heard. Much of the feedback stated that banking and CRA matters are also dealt with on online platforms and are secure; therefore voting should also be available online. Some constituents were not comfortable with the idea of an online voting system. The main concerns included security and "one Canadian, one vote." Online voting platforms cannot guarantee that each voter is voting on their own. In addition to that, online platforms can be hacked and tampered with. Overall, constituents are pleased with going to polling stations and see this as a viable option, in addition to voting online as long as it is secure.

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

Most constituents believe that the current electoral process is unfair, and their votes are not being accurately translated in a democratic system. They feel that a system of greater proportionality needs to be adopted to eliminate the misrepresentation of votes in a riding. Most constituents also believed that if greater proportionality cannot be implemented in the electoral system, an MMP system should be implemented to better translate their votes. They also believe that we need better educational systems in place to inform voters on the issues, so that votes accurately represent their political opinions. They also believe that there needs to be more diversity in the House of Commons.

Since the Donald Trump revelations in the United States, a number of constituents have discussed their discomfort with advance polls, and the risk in voting before a significant disclosure or (e.g. debates, answers to a reporter's questions).

The concern with advance polls is that not all people will vote with the same information provided throughout the entire election campaign. It is important that all voters have access to the same information before casting their ballots. Constituents would like to see a way to have all voting done on the same day – via online for those who cannot make it to the polls and those who are overseas.

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

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Overall the consensus among the constituents was that their votes are not fairly and accurately translated. They would like for greater proportionality to be implemented as they feel it will be a more transparent way to show voter intention. Constituents think that many eligible voters do not vote because their votes hold very little power. They would like to see fair representation of their votes, to feel their votes are counted when electing a political candidate. As it pertains to voting online, most people were for this option as long as the system is secure, and cannot be tampered with.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13th, 2016

MP's signature:



(Name)

HON. CAROLYN BENNETT.

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

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