

CHRIS BITTLE

TOWN HALL REPORT  
ON ELECTORAL REFORM  
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

CHRIS BITTLE

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. Sept. 7/16	7:00pm – 9:00pm	St. Catharines Public Library – Centennial Branch	44
2.			
3.			
4.			
<b>Form:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament’s visual presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP’s office <input type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input 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 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 type="checkbox"/>

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](mailto:ERRE@parl.gc.ca)

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

## 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)**

- Many Members of Parliament do not receive 50% of the vote in their Riding. That means more than 50% of voters do not have their vote “count for anything”.
- Nationally, a Party can assume a majority government without receiving a majority of the votes. There were concerns raised by the ability to hold hold 100% of the power while receiving less than 50% of the vote.

**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)**

Constituents identified a number of opportunities Proportional Representation provides that First Past the Post does not:

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- Nationally, a Party can assume a majority government without receiving a majority of the votes. There were concerns raised by the ability to hold hold 100% of the power while receiving less than 50% of the vote.
- This system would force Parties to create lists of candidates (individuals that would be appointed based on number of national votes a Party receives) that are more reflective of Canada’s population.

While there was some support for the Proportional Representation system described in the presentation provided by the Library of Parliament a number of concerns were raised by constituents:

- Members of Parliament ought to be responsible for and accountable to an identified group of constituents. In a system that uses proportional representation this would not necessarily be the case.
- This system may be more likely to produce minority governments, which can stagnate governments’ ability to move their agenda forward.

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- Constituents in attendance felt cautious about Proportional Representation providing an avenue for “extreme parties” to gain momentum and elect Members of Parliament.

### **Ranked Ballot and Single Transferrable Vote**

Many constituents in attendance felt that a Ranked Ballot system provided opportunities to change the way Canadians elect their government for the better. Through a group discussion, the following points were raised in regards to a Ranked Ballot system:

- This system would force parties to try to connect with all constituents during campaigns instead of only trying to reach their base. Even if a party knows a constituent will not select them first, they will want to make sure they are the constituent’s second choice. This same sentiment was shared about Single Transferrable Vote.
- This system, as well as Single Transferrable Vote, would encourage parties to campaign more on issues and positive attributes of candidates rather than fear/negativity and why constituents should not vote for opposing candidates.
- Concerns were raised about Ranked Ballot or Single Transferable Vote being too convoluted and could mean that election results are not as clear, easy to understand or immediate as in our current system.

**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)**

- A number of individuals felt that Canadians who have chosen not to participate in the democratic process did so because they felt disenfranchised by the process. They felt that while they may support a third (or fourth) candidate, they knew this individual was not going to win and therefore their vote did not “count for anything”.

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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)**

- While there was little discussion on this topic, residents in attendance did not feel that it should be mandatory to cast a ballot.

**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)**

- Most constituents in attendance were in favour of computers playing a role in casting ballots but not all were in favour of voting over the Internet. There was discussion about **electronic balloting** would enable votes to be tabulated faster but constituents did not feel that physically attending polling stations was an inhibitor to voting.

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


- A majority of those in attendance felt that the government must hold a **referendum** on a proposed change to the voting system. It was argued that a majority government could not make a decision of this magnitude unilaterally and that Canadians must be formally consulted. Those opposed to a referendum suggested that unless the government is willing to spend millions of dollars to ensure the public is properly informed about both sides of a referendum decision this decision is best left in the hands of the individuals that were elected to represent us.
- One individual wanted to ensure electoral systems like that of New Zealand be considered. This constituent felt it was important that New Zealand's system allocated specific representatives to Aboriginal Peoples and that this is something Canada should consider as a method of ensuring **Aboriginal representation** in the House of Commons.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM**

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<b>PARTICIPANTS (suggested limit: 1000 words)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The St. Catharines Electoral Reform Town Hall was open to the public and 44 constituents attended. Many of these individuals are professionals in the community but none were present in an official capacity.</li> </ul>	
<b>Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)</b>	<b>Date: 10/14/2016</b>
<b>MP's signature:</b> 	<b>CHRIS BITTLE (Name)</b>

**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.*

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