

HON. SCOTT BRISON, P.C., M.P.
KINGS-HANTS



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

L'HON SCOTT BRISON, C.P.,
DÉPUTÉ
KINGS-HANTS

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

CONSULTATION DETAILS

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. 8/15/16	7:00pm to 8:30pm	K.C. Irving Environmental Centre, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS	77 attendees, 4 employees

- Form:** Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation
 Presentation from the MP's office
 Open microphone
 Question and answer session
 Guest speaker
 Other (please specify):

The Library of Parliament's visual presentation was printed and used as a briefing document for each break-out discussion group to answer the 5 discussion questions. The M.P. and one staff member took notes while moving in between groups to form a larger picture of what people's answers were. Each group at the end gave a presentation of their answers. Each group made their own notes which were collected to add to the report.

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 type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Answers below were distilled from the notes of the M.P., one staff member's notes, and notes from each group of participants.

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

The group of constituents that attended this town hall did not feel that the current first past the post (FPTP) system represented all voters and that their votes were not fairly translated to seats. Their opinion was that the results of an election should better reflect the popular vote in seats. They also felt that their voice wasn't being heard in Parliament. Particularly that while they had local representation they had no national representation for their political opinions.

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.)?

Alternative voting systems were presented in a briefing document taken from the Library of Parliament's summary of different electoral systems; this document was outlined at the town hall explaining how FPTP, Single Transferrable Vote (STV), Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) and

the Alternative Vote (AV) could operate. The overwhelming majority of participants supported AV or MMP and were already familiar with the systems.

They supported this because these systems maintained the existing federal ridings in Canada and would reflect the popular vote better in the House of Commons. In the discussion about MMP people were confident that deciding how non-riding Member's seats would be assigned could be reasonably determined by the electoral reform committee. Additionally some participants suggested that the idea of governments being formed in coalitions should not be a feared, that many countries around the world form coalition governments (examples given were Germany and other European countries).

The constituents liked having local representation that was accessible for local issues but they wanted their ideology to be represented at a federal level, separate from that representative if needed. As well they opposed the changing or merging of riding boundaries, as combining a rural Nova Scotia would result in a riding that would be too large and fail to have a truly local representative. People are happy with how Parliament represents their community currently, and oppose the enlargement of the constituency because it would dilute that local connection that is important in rural communities.

For these reasons the participants preferred MMP and AV over other systems of electoral reform.

Did participants discuss why they feel many Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process? Did they suggest ways to encourage participation?

The participants of the town hall meeting felt discouraged by several factors. As described above the voters who participated felt unrepresented in Ottawa in terms of ideology. They also suggested that smear campaigns and attack ads hurt participation, as did a lack of education in the schools on civics.

The solution suggested was to increase education in high schools to promote youth engagement and teach them about civic responsibilities. This they proposed would educate voters more and reduce the effectiveness of attack ads. This could be conducted within the mandate of Elections Canada and could also benefit from a lowering of the voter age to 16. Therefore every student has the statistical chance to vote for the first time in a federal or provincial election in high school, where a poll could be located. This would foster civic engagement in young Canadians and fight voter apathy.

Did participants feel that it should be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.)

There were mixed opinions on whether or not to support mandatory voting.

On the opposition it was argued that it promoted uninformed voting practices that could be easily swayed by advertising and populism. The question one person asked was if everyone had to vote would people be more informed? They did not think mandatory voting would create a more informed electorate.

People supporting mandatory voting had the proposition of having a \$20 tax rebate for voting, an incentive that would promote people to vote but not force them. They also wanted to ensure that there was a way for people to spoil their ballot in case they did not want to vote.

This was the most divisive issue during this town hall meeting between the participants.

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.)

Most people opposed online voting and they believed it could never be as secure as the current voting methods with paper ballots.

It was acknowledged that no computer in the world is always secure, and with the possibility of tampering, the legitimacy of our democracy is eroded by that doubt. Voting machines in the United States of America were brought up as an example of casting doubt in elections with voters.

However in an effort to promote more voter participation, a suggestion was made to make election day a national holiday, with the possibility of picking a weekday that maximizes voter participation.

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

The other topic raised was the opposition to any form of a referendum. That a referendum would simplify a complex issue to a yes or no question and that expert opinion was needed. It was not discussed widely because the overwhelming majority of participants opposed it, and instead wanted to get there ideas to the committee.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

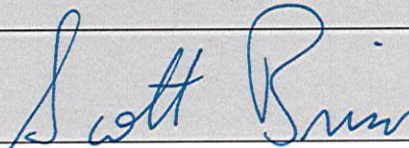
A few universal agreements could be seen on what kind of democratic reform was wanted in Kings-Hants between all the participants. The following values were highlighted as important:

- Local representation was critical to every participant and was a common theme.
- Improving the fairness of representation in the House of Commons.
- Support for civic education in high schools to create informed and active voters.
- Improving accessibility to voters while maintaining the integrity of elections.
- Opposition to a referendum.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13, 2016

MP's signature:



(Name) Hon. Scott Brison, P.C., M.P.