

**BILL CASEY  
CUMBERLAND-COLCHESTER**

**TOWN HALL REPORT  
ON ELECTORAL REFORM  
PUBLIC CONSULTATION**



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

**BILL CASEY  
CUMBERLAND-COLCHESTER**

**RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS  
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME  
ÉLECTORALE**

<b>CONSULTATION(S)</b>			
<b>Date(s) of the Meeting(s)</b>	<b>Time and Length (start time and end time)</b>	<b>Location of Consultation</b>	<b>Total Number of People in Attendance (you may indicate the number of volunteers and employees who assisted with the meeting)</b>
1. July 13 2016	3:00 – 5:00 (2 hr)	Stewiacke, NS	25
2. August 11 2016	6:00 – 8:00 (2 hr)	Springhill, NS	23
3.			
4.			
<b>Form: Workshop and Townhall</b> – Opening remarks in plenary session; followed by 45 minutes of break-out sessions (3 groups with different focus questions); followed by 30-45 minutes of report and discussion.			
<b>SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)</b>			
Voting systems: Yes	Replacement of the current voting system: Yes	Voter turnout: Yes	Accessibility and inclusiveness: Yes
Mandatory voting: Yes	Online voting: Yes	Local representation: Yes	Other (please specify and describe below) Proportionality; accountability; comprehensibility

<b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b>
<b>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)</b>
A few participants were prepared to advocate for FPTP because it encourages moderation of extreme views and tends to deliver governments that can pursue a clear agenda. Some participants acknowledged that FPTP is easy to understand, usually leads to a clear result on election day and encourages an MP to be accountable to residents of the constituency. A significant number of participants felt that FPTP is less fair because it does not correspond with the national popular vote share. Some feel that if their vote does not count proportionately in the result, then it did not count at all.

*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*

**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)**

**Pure Proportional Representation:** A few participants came with the agenda of promoting pure proportional representation. They expressed a strong desire to not vote strategically; a desire to cast a vote which aligns with their political ideology and by so doing strengthen the representation of that ideology in Parliament.

**Mixed-member Proportional Representation:** This was discussed as a blend of our current system, ensuring a degree of regional representation while also ensuring that the result is more proportional. In this context, the importance of MPs being accountable to their geographic area came to the fore. The thought of larger ridings was not welcomed; but the thought of greatly expanding the number of seats in Parliament was also not greeted with cheers. There was anxiety that this system could not be counted on to ensure that areas which are geographically remote, economically disadvantaged or sparsely populated would receive appropriate attention from Parliament and government.

**Ranked Ballot:** A majority of participants felt this would be an improvement on the existing system. PR advocates were strongly opposed to the system, believing it reinforces lop-sided outcomes seen in FPTP. The relative simplicity of ranking candidates, compared to MMPR – where there are possibly a dozen seats to fill with each ballot – was seen as another positive attribute.

**Proportional Cabinet:** It was also suggested that proportional representation within Cabinet, with or without significant changes to the electoral system, could deliver the voice that advocates of PR are seeking and move more power from the executive to Parliament. This was not studied in-depth but it did generate some interesting discussion.

**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)**

Participants felt that many factors contribute to low voter turnout, while recognizing that turnout is highly variable between provinces and between ridings. This included:

- Distance to polling stations
- Geographic size of riding
- Familiarity with candidates in the community
- A sense that their vote does not count
- Lack of interest in the political process
- Lack of time to engage with issues

Mandatory voting and tax credits for voting were both discussed but were not highly recommended. Electronic voting was discussed, with many feeling it would make it easier to engage and encourage disengaged voters, particularly younger ones, to participate. Some expressed reservations that electronic voting would carry security concerns; and a few felt that the casualness of electronic voting does not correspond to the significance of the democratic right to vote.

More tools, money and power for Elections Canada was strongly desired. Many felt that Elections Canada should advertise how, when and where to vote more actively on social media and in places the average person looks, including in grocery store flyers.

Some advocates of PR believe that this system would encourage voter participation because every vote counts.

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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)**

Generally they did not feel it should be mandatory to cast a ballot. While acknowledging that it may drive turnout, people did not feel it had the potential to generate better outcomes, in terms of expressing the political will of the electorate, since it would not be a willful act but a compulsory one.

**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)**

Electronic or on-line voting (used interchangeably here) was discussed. There was a willingness overall to have it as an option, particularly for Canadians overseas. There was no desire to have a purely electronic system. There was a strong desire to maintain paper back-ups, physical ballot counts in close races, and maintain physical voting infrastructure for those who prefer it.

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

Referendum was raised by two or three participants, but most participants were opposed on the bases that:

- It would cost too much
- Turnout for a referendum on electoral reform was likely to be poor compared to a general election turnout
- The subject matter is not susceptible to a simple "Yes/No" question
- The conduct of the Quebec 1995 and Brexit referenda did not engender confidence in the referendum process
- A majority of Canadians have already voted in support of parties advocating electoral reform in the 2015 election

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

**In terms of an electoral system, Participants in this riding told us that:**

- **Simplicity is key to encourage participation**
- **Local representation is very important to most voters**
- **There is a significant desire for greater proportionality in the result**
- **There is no appetite for drastically altering riding boundaries or greatly expanding the number of seats in Parliament.**

**Participants were generally open minded about electronic voting. They are supportive of efforts to increase turnout, but not of mandatory voting.**

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*Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016*

<b>Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)</b>		<b>Date:</b> Aug 29/16
MP's signature: <i>Bill Casey</i>		<b>Bill Casey MP</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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