

ARNOLD CHAN, MP
SCARBOROUGH-AGINCOURT

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

ARNOLD CHAN DÉPUTÉ
SCARBOROUGH-AGINCOURT

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. 13/09/16	6PM-8PM	St. Paul's L'Amoreaux Centre	30
2.			
3.			
4.			
Form: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office <input checked="" 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 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
<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 participants had a mixed range of opinions about the current system for electing Members of Parliament. Some suggested that the current system is working and that there needs to be more attention in encouraging more people to vote, whereas others argued that there definitely needs to be an alternative voting system to the current system.</p> <p>One individual suggested that the current system allows for majority governments which are needed in order to get things done. They also liked the idea of 1 person 1 vote in the current system. However, it was also suggested that although they may like one candidate, they may not like the Party that candidate represents, which limits options for the elector. It was also suggested that there needs to be more attention put in place to prevent voter fraud such as by having a mandatory National ID card, or by enforcing some sort of identification mechanism to prove that a voter is actually a citizen of Canada. The current system does not enforce preventing voter fraud.</p>

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

Others suggested majority systems under a first past the post system is not representative of the entire electorate, and that it creates false majorities. Some argued that a proportional representation system may help better translated votes; however it would create a higher possibility for minority governments which can be problematic in terms of passing legislation. This would create a long period of ineffective governments. Furthermore, it was suggested that a PR system does not benefit direct voter engagement. The lists would be pre-determined on who would get a Seat if elected, and this would not be good for voter accountability locally. It was also suggested that perhaps an alternative system can include a combination of proportional representation as well as another system.

Some also argued that the current system does not have to be changed, but what does need to be changed is the behaviour of individual voters. Specifically, trying to increase the number of people who take the time to go out and vote (voter engagement) such as by giving incentives, or by giving people penalties for not voting. With increased voter turnout, this would translate into better translated votes.

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)

Several alternatives to the current system were discussed. These include: Alternative voting (Preferential Voting), Two-Round (Run-Off) voting, Block Voting, Ranked Ballot systems, Proportional Representation (including both closed and open lists systems), transferable voting systems, mixed electoral systems (including both mixed member majority, and Mixed member Proportional). Mandatory voting such as the system in Australia was also discussed.

Many participants highlighted the importance of local representation as well as simplicity. Local representation is important for many voters because they need to know who they are voting for so they can be held accountable for their actions as representatives. It was also suggested that if a new voting system was to be put in place, the system must be communicated in the simplest way possible to avoid voter confusion. It was argued that if this is not done properly, it will only drive more voters away. It was also discussed that proportionality would be good but not at the cost of losing local representation.

The idea of legitimacy was also an important feature that was identified. The question of having better legitimacy such as by having better voter turnout and local representation was important to many of the participants.

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)

It was suggested the current system does not give an option for people who either do not want to vote, or simply do not like any of the listed Party candidates. This causes them to not vote, and again decrease voter turnout. To fairly reflect votes of those who do not have a preferred candidate, it was suggested to have a None of The Above option on ballots to accommodate these types of voters. On the contrary, some rejected the idea of a None of The Above Option, as it limits accountability for the person that does end up getting elected.

Some participants also suggested that some Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process due to a lack of informed engagement. They either lack information of the local candidates, or they are not informed of the policy platforms from the individual parties.

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Other ways to encourage participation that were discussed: idea of having incentives such as a tax breaks, or by creating penalties for people who do not participate. Participants believe that a small penalty for failing to vote would be sufficient for encouraging more people to go out and vote. It was also suggested that voter engagement should start early to educate voters so that they will feel obligated to cast their ballot.

It was also suggested that there needs to be greater accommodation for individuals with mobility issues, and for seniors in terms of voting. This could include things such as increasing mobile voting, or ensuring all senior homes facilities have voting poll locations.

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

Some participants did feel that it should be mandatory to cast a ballot so that they can hold their local representative accountable for their actions. However, there was debate on what types of consequences mandatory voting would bring. Would penalties or incentives work better for increasing voter participation? What kind of penalty would be sufficient for people to want to avoid paying and therefore going out and vote? These were the kinds of questions that were discussed.

It was also suggested that voters should be given the option to spoil a ballot which would require them to actually go to the polls and therefore participating. However, the negative was that there would be less voter accountability if they were given the option to purposely spoil their 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)

Online voting was also discussed during the consultation. There was a lot of opposition to online voting due to security concerns in today's digital age, as well as the lack of direct voter participation. These participants suggested that it would also be difficult to control online voter fraud, and therefore would not be good for democracy. Some participants suggested that current system would work just fine, however can be better by improving things like encouraging voter turnout, accessibility (mobile voting), and enforcing mechanisms to avoid voter fraud.

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

It was suggested by some participants that the Government should reconsider a deadline for electoral reform and that there is no significant rush. This will give the Government more time to consult with a more broad range of Canadians before a change can be implemented. Furthermore, the consultation materials should also be considered being translated in wider ethnic languages to accommodate citizens who have language barriers. The Government can also work with local volunteer groups who are strong grass root level organizations to engage more broadly with citizens on the issue.

The idea of having a referendum was also discussed. Some participants were not in favour of having a referendum on electoral reform if it were to be too complicated for the average voter to understand. They believed Canadians should be educated on the different voting systems if a referendum were to be conducted. The cost of having a referendum would also be significant to consider. However, they believed that it is important to have a broad consultation mechanism in place for voters if there is to be a change in our electoral system.

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It was suggested that a referendum to agree to a specific alternative voting system would be ok (a Yes or NO type of referendum). Anything substantive would leave room for confusion for the average voter.

Increasing women & minority representation was also raised. Although, there has been significant shift, several participants believed we could still do better to encourage representation amongst women & minorities.

Accessibility is a significant issue for seniors and for individuals with mobility issues. There needs to be better accommodation for helping these individuals.

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

The overall recommendation from the participants of this public consultation goes back to the initial five principles set out by the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. The ideas, and comments all reflect these general principles which includes: effectiveness and legitimacy; engagement; accessibility and inclusiveness; integrity; and local representation. There was general consensus amongst the participants that these principles need to be taken into account if a change in our electoral system does occur in the near future.

1) Effectiveness & Legitimacy

Any change to our electoral system needs to reflect effective public confidence. Voter legitimacy is also important, specifically in enforcing rules whereby only Citizens are eligible to vote in elections. The current system allows voter fraud to occur, and this needs to be addressed in order to increase legitimacy in our electoral system. In turn, this will increase public confidence. Local representation is also important for encouraging people to vote (especially young Canadians). The primary responsibility for all Members of Parliament is to ensure that their constituents are well represented.

2) Engagement

There needs to be better voter engagement specifically in encouraging more people to vote and participate in the democratic process. The participants talked about implementing incentives for people to vote, or even penalties for those who choose not to. Mandatory voting is also an option; however what would be an appropriate penalty for failing to vote would require further discussion. We also need to address the issue of those who personally choose not to vote because they do not like the candidates on the ballot sheet. We discussed the idea of having a None of the Above Option on ballots so that it requires people to still go to the polls; however there is also the question on accountability with that option. There was general consensus that a proposed change to our electoral system needs to have mechanisms to encourage voter engagement.

3) Accessibility & Inclusiveness

There needs to be better access for eligible voters who have mobility issues. This includes Seniors and people with disabilities. The participants raised ideas such as having polling locations close to or in Senior homes, and having more mobile voting options. Our voting system should also be inclusive to all minority groups including women. There should be better representation amongst women and minorities.

4) Integrity

There needs to be integrity amongst voters and encourage them to participate. It was suggested that voter engagement should begin early. Any change in our electoral system needs to be secure while safeguarding public trust in our democratic system. Citizens need to be educated on who they are

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voting for; this may avoid them from not voting.

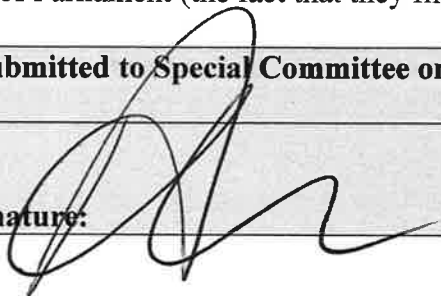
5) Local Representation

Strong emphasis on local representation to ensure accountability and access to the local elected representative. Some electoral systems do not enforce local representation (such as proportional representation), whereas others do (alternative voting, plurality systems). There was general consensus that local representation is important for holding elected representatives to account. While the current system encourages local representation; can there be ways to increase accountability? There is also better direct voter engagement when people know who they are voting for and what that person stands for. This is also critical for the overall accountability for Members of Parliament (the fact that they first and foremost accountable to their constituents).

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: 13/10/2016

MP's signature:



(Name) ARNOLD CHAN

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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