

HON. STÉPHANE DION  
SAINT-LAURENT

TOWN HALL REPORT  
ON ELECTORAL REFORM  
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



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SAINT-LAURENT

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)
October 7, 2016	6 pm to 7:30 pm – Time: 90 minutes	Centre des loisirs de Saint-Laurent	Approximately 130 participants
<b>Form:</b> <input 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	Online voting: <input type="checkbox"/>	Local representation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify and describe below) <input type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
<p><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></p> <p>One third of the participants said they were against complete and comprehensive reform of the current system, which they said was stable. One participant said that the system that we currently use allows majority groups to integrate majority trends. The defenders of the first past the post system did however go on to say that our system needs to be improved, specifically in terms of government effectiveness and the integration of minority groups.</p> <p>Two thirds of the participants expressed a desire to see our current electoral system reformed (details in the next section).</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](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)**

We invited Mr. André Blais, Professor at the Université de Montréal and holder of the Research Chair in Electoral Studies, to come explain the different options possible in Canada in terms of voting systems to the voters of Saint-Laurent. The professor listed the characteristics of the following voting systems: first past the post, preferential, proportional party-list, single transferable vote, majority mixed-member proportional, compensatory mixed-member proportional. These voting systems differ in their approach to three questions: Should the size of the ridings be changed? Who do we vote for and how many candidates do we vote for? How are the votes counted?

During the question and answer period, the participants were given an opportunity to ask for clarifications regarding the alternatives to the current voting system and to express their preferences. These questions highlighted the following priorities for the participants:

- Representation of minority groups, specifically Aboriginals
- Representation of small parties, encouraging a diversity of ideas
- Equal representation between rural and urban areas
- Increased voter turnout
- Government effectiveness
- Avoiding strategic voting
- Ensuring MP proximity with his/her constituents
- Reconciling urban and regional values in the case of a mixed-member voting system
- Avoiding conflicts of interest due to the dual role of certain MPs as parliamentarians and members of the government

Among the alternatives presented, the participants who spoke expressed a preference for the following voting systems:

- **Majority mixed-member voting system:** Advantageous since it keeps elements of the current system. It is therefore more of a natural evolution, rather than a complete overhaul.
- **Proportional voting system:** It can correct representation distortions that can be experienced with the current system.
- **Alternative voting system:** Makes it possible to maintain the proximity between MPs and their constituents.

The participants had the following questions:

- Would a proportional voting system dilute the government's power to do its work? Would it make for a less effective form of government?
- Would it be necessary to amend the Constitution in order to change the voting system? Would all the provinces have to agree to it?
- A government elected using a new voting system should accurately reflect public opinion on key subjects.

**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)**

Although the reasons why certain Canadians choose not to participate in the democratic process were not addressed during this consultation, one of the participants did express the opinion that the voting system is one way of encouraging voter participation, but it is not the only one. Education can also have a positive impact on participation.

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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)**

The consultation focussed on the reasons why reform may be necessary as well as on the alternatives preferred by the participants along with the characteristics they deemed priorities in a new voting system.

**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)**

The consultation focussed on the reasons why reform may be necessary as well as on the alternatives preferred by the participants along with the characteristics they deemed priorities in a new voting system.

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

See answers to the questions above.

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

Approximately one third of the participants said they were against electoral reform, deeming our current system to be sufficiently effective. They did, however, have reservations regarding government effectiveness.

Two thirds of the participants expressed the desire to see our current electoral system reformed, pointing out that the new voting system would have to take the following priorities into account:

- Representation of minority groups, specifically Aboriginals
- Representation of small parties, encouraging a diversity of ideas
- Equal representation between rural and urban areas
- Increased voter turnout
- Government effectiveness
- Avoiding strategic voting
- Ensuring MP proximity with his/her constituents
- Reconciling urban and regional values in the case of a mixed-member voting system
- Avoiding conflicts of interest due to the dual role of certain MPs as parliamentarians and members of the government

Among the alternatives presented, the participants who spoke expressed a preference for the following voting systems:

- Majority mixed-member voting system
- Proportional voting system
- Alternative voting system

The consultation did not address mandatory voting or online voting.

**Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)**

**Date: October 14, 2016**

**MP's signature: Stéphane Dion**

**STÉPHANE DION**

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