

JAMES MALONEY, MP
ETOBICOKE—LAKESHORE
 &
HON. KIRSTY DUNCAN, MP
ETOBICOKE NORTH



HOUSE OF COMMONS
 CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
 CANADA

JAMES MALONEY, MP
ETOBICOKE—LAKESHORE
 &
HON. KIRSTY DUNCAN, MP
ETOBICOKE NORTH

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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. 6 Sept 2016	7-9pm	Etobicoke Civic Centre	Approximately 80
2.			
3.			
4.			
Form: <input 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: x	Replacement of the current voting system: x	Voter turnout: <input type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility and inclusiveness: x
Mandatory voting: x	Online voting: x	Local representation: x	Other (please specify and describe below) <input type="checkbox"/>

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)
<p>Participants identified the system's inherent flaws as including: financial barriers to running for office, ballots denying voters the option to "decline" to vote, and election results not reflecting the totality of votes cast. Concerns were discussed, including the marginalization of voters with disabilities, First Peoples, ethnic minorities, and small political parties. Participants also identified that some votes aren't reflected in the current system (if one votes for a party that doesn't win) and the limited regional vote equity, exemplified by a vote in PEI being "worth more" than a vote in the GTA.</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

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)

Participants recognized that in the current system, people would like more direct contact with local representatives as well as an increased role for backbenchers. Alternatives such as proportional representation (including mixed-member proportional representation) and ranked voting were discussed; although there were mixed sentiments regarding their merits and pitfalls.

Key features were identified to be representation by population, representation of minority votes (which would be achieved by proportional representation), the consideration of multiple political parties, ensuring minimal room for party manipulation, party platforms being available in traditional media, and less televised political advertisements. Furthermore, accountability was identified as a key feature and supplemented by the suggestion that non-compliance with political promises carry the threat of replacement of representatives.

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 mentioned that voters are apathetic towards elections due to the inability of politicians to follow through on many promises they make. Voting is not being promoted strongly enough in terms of the input it affords individuals. It can be difficult for some voters to make it to election locations, thus necessitating that more reliable and frequent transportation be made available on election day for those who are unable to travel independently. A related idea was to have more advanced polling days and stations. One group recommended Yale's Bruce Ackerman and Ian Ayres and Harvard's Larry Lessig support of a voucher system in which every eligible voter has a \$50 voucher or tax credit to donate to a campaign of his or her choice.
(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/07/22/can-vouchers-fix-campaign-finance/>)

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

While most participants did not appear to support mandatory voting, there were some proponents of the idea. It was widely agreed upon that an electoral system with mandatory voting would necessitate an increase in education, as well as civics education beginning at younger ages across the country, but it was also suggested by some participants that forcing citizens to vote would characterize a "police state". Furthermore, it was opined that forcing people to vote would ignore the right to decline involvement in the democratic process, and could force people to make uneducated votes. To address this, one group of participants suggested that an option to "decline" be included on the ballot.

Another perspective offered against making voting mandatory was that it would not address voter apathy, and would deny the government the ability to examine the democratic process, specifically voter turnout, to gauge political satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

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, or "e-voting", was discussed thoroughly over the course of the event. It was noticed that this was an aspect missing from our current electoral system, though there seemed to be more arguments against the implementation of online voting than in favour of it. While it was suggested that online voting would reflect the movement toward a digital society and could result in increased voter turnout, there were widely expressed fears regarding voter fraud, hacking/cyber security, server crashes due to overuse, increased targeted political advertising, voter profiling, and language

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barriers. It was also considered that online voting could further marginalize voters without internet access.

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

Please see above responses.

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

Generally speaking, participants felt that voting should be made a more “special” experience and that the registration process might be where this could be achieved. Ideally, voters would be made to feel like individuals as opposed to numbers. In addition, it was stated that there should be fewer financial barriers to running for political office and that the ballots themselves should include the option to “decline” to vote, with more transportation being made available for people to get to polls. To this end, it was also suggested that there be more advanced polls.

Overall, there seemed to be mixed feelings regarding the current first-past-the-post system. Due to the participants’ loose adherence to the topics asked about in the questions presented at the event, there was not much discussion about the specific merits and pitfalls of the current electoral system, though it was recognized that some votes are not represented in first-past-the-post. However, it was clear that the participants supported a more direct say with MP’s as well as more empowered MP’s, including backbenchers. It was also suggested that more seats be added to increase regional vote equity.

Participants felt that there should be less room for party manipulation of the electoral system, and that noncompliance with political promises should be able to result in replacement of particular MP’s, in some instances. It was opined that this type of accountability would help voters to trust the government more, thus resulting in decreased voter apathy/disillusionment. Some participants also thought there should be a Government Commission formed to investigate political engagement among Canadian First Peoples, and the party platforms should be presented in traditional media only, with no paid political advertisements on television.

Proportional representation and ranked voting were the alternative electoral systems discussed by participants. Proportional representation was discussed in terms of serving to provide minorities and other marginalized populations (discussed above) with more of a say, and being used as a tool to address regional vote equity, specifically votes cast in rural versus urban areas and votes cast populous versus less populous provinces. With regards to ranked voting, it was emphasized that this system could push people to research all party platforms and to consider other parties, but it was also pointed out that it could lead to people voting to prevent certain candidates from being elected rather than aiming to elect the best candidate.

There was also a consensus that the alternative models are confusing and voters would be challenged to understand them.

Please see above for the suggestions and opinions from the event’s participants regarding mandatory voting and online voting.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 14, 2014

MP’s signature:



James Maloney, M.P.

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