

**JULIE DZEROWICZ  
DAVENPORT**

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



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

**JULIE DZEROWICZ  
DAVENPORT**

**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>
Tuesday, September 13	6:30pm- 8:30pm	New Horizons Tower 1140 Bloor Street West Toronto ON M6H 4E6	Attendees: 104 Staff: 2 Volunteers: 8
<b>Form:</b> X Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office X Open microphone X Question and answer session X Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):			
<b>SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)</b>			
Voting systems: X	Replacement of the current voting system: X	Voter turnout: X	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?**

Participants of Davenport's electoral reform town hall indicated a general dislike for the current First Past the Post (FPTP) system. A vast majority of individuals present stated that FPTP is flawed and outdated, and that it must be exchanged for a system that better reflects the diversity of opinions and voices present in Canada.

Participants expressed concern that FPTP favours the status quo and two-party systems, and that it encourages "strategic voting", whereby citizens vote for a candidate other than their true preference in order to avoid an undesirable outcome. Participants also indicated that the current system causes discrepancies between the popular vote and distorts the voting outcome.

Despite the resounding disapproval, a select few participants stated that the issue with the electoral system was not the system itself; rather, it is a low voter turnout and a general lack of engagement that creates representation issues with voting.



**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.)?**

When discussing alternatives to the current system there was a discomfort in the room, even for those who were knowledgeable about all the options available. Many did not understand the basic alternatives, and felt they needed more information about each before they could make an intelligent decision. The sentiment shared was that there are too many Canadians who are not educated enough on the topic to make an informed decision of which electoral system they would prefer.

Despite this fact, various participants did discuss some alternatives. Many indicated that they would prefer Proportional Representation (PR) because it appropriately reflects the will of Canadians and accurately translates the votes to representation in the House of Commons. It was also mentioned that PR would mean an end to majority governments, and would therefore motivate all parties to work together. While some saw this as a positive aspect of PR, others stated that this system would rather cause gridlock in the House of Commons. Reference was made to the recent political situation in Spain, where parliament could not decide on a Prime Minister after an election, and a second election was called as a result.

Residents in favour of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) supported this system because they believe it is the best way to register and reflect all political opinions across the country through local representation. Some also indicated that MMP also addresses the discrepancies between the popular vote and outcome that arise during FPTP.

There was much talk about implementing a ranked ballot in order to further promote a more proportional election outcome. It was explained by one of our panelists that a ranked ballot is not an electoral system; rather, it is a type of ballot that can be used in an election. However, many participants were in favour of this type of ballot as another way to obtain a result that accurately demonstrates the will of Canadians.

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

A number of reasons were cited for Canadian's lack of engagement in the democratic process. It was articulated that the current FPTP system encourages disengagement because citizens do not feel like their true vote is being accounted for. Residents further mentioned that many citizens feel that Canada's political parties do not reflect the current needs and opinions of the masses, and that there are not enough major parties available for voters to choose from. It was also suggested that lowering the voting age to 16 years of age may help increase voter turnout and democratic engagement among youth.

Above all, many participants remarked that low engagement is attributed to a general sense of apathy fueled by inadequate education about the importance of voting and the democratic process. It was widely discussed that Canadians need more robust civic education in order to increase participation in the democratic process.

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

The majority of participants were not in favour of implementing mandatory voting. The participants felt that mandatory voting would lead to uninformed decisions. Many agreed that it is best to educate citizens about the democratic process to increase engagement and ensure they make informed decisions.



**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.)**

Constituents present at the town hall were divided on the issue of online voting. Proponents of online voting stated that it would be beneficial in increasing accessibility and voter turnout, but if it were to be implemented measures would need to be taken in order to ensure it was as secure and confidential as possible.

Those who were against the idea of online voting were concerned about security and the risk of elections being corrupted by hackers. Residents also mentioned that online voting could potentially allow distractions and last minute influences on one's vote.

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

Participants raised several other issues pertaining to democratic reform, including the topic of using a referendum to decide on the future of our electoral system. Participants were divided on this issue. Those in support said that a referendum would be the only way to change the electoral system exactly according to the will of the Canadian people and would minimize the hand the government would have in this decision.

Those who were against having a referendum indicated that referenda that have previously taken place in Canada have had very low turn outs, and were unsatisfactory because people were not properly informed on what they were voting for. The idea of a referendum for electoral reform was particularly concerning to some because of the current state of low democratic engagement in Canada, and the fact that very few people are informed about what options are available as alternative systems. Some also stated that having the referendum at the same time as a general election would be ill advised.

A lack of awareness and education on the issue of electoral reform is a serious concern that was repeatedly raised during the town hall. Participants are concerned that Canadians will not get the reform they are truly looking for if the majority of Canadians are not involved or informed about this process. While there was great appreciation expressed for this consultation among the participants, there was also a general sense of worry that any reform that comes from this consultation will have come from the voices and engagement of a select few, and thus it will not appropriately reflect that Canadians want.

The issue of the accessibility of voting was also discussed. Some participants felt that efforts to increase voter engagement among ethnic groups and individuals who do not speak English have been inadequate. The point of increasing accessibility with the use of online voting was also raised, but as previously mentioned there are also security concerns associated with this suggestion.

Suggestions to increase voter turnout were also proposed by participants at the town hall. Beyond the previously mentioned recommendations for online voting and decreasing the voting age to 16 years of age, some participants suggested that Canada allows permanent residents the right to vote. This was not well received by the majority of people present. Participants also indicated that moving to a system other than FPTP would likely increase voter turnout because citizens would feel like their voice is properly heard under a more proportional system.

Finally, several participants questioned how much time is left in order to appropriately and efficiently reform the electoral system if the government wishes to keep its promise to have a new system in place for the next general election. Participants did not want this process to be rushed and were worried about the legal and legislative implications of reforming the electoral system.



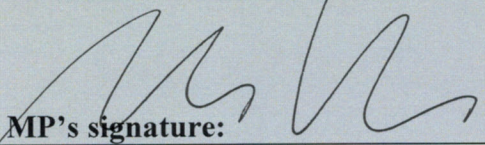
## SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

**All the comments presented in this report must be taken into the proper context. The format for the electoral reform discussion was a town hall. All three invited speakers were people who did not agree with the status quo, and most people who showed up – though not all – were people who did not agree with the status quo either. In general, there is very little traction on this issue in the Davenport riding. All the comments made in this submission must be considered in light of the aforementioned facts.**

**The issues and opinions raised were made by people who do not believe in the current system, but in general Davenport residents are not engaged in this issue. For those who are interested in the topic, they are trying to better understand the issue and the need for change at a basic level. There was a general discomfort with moving forward on such a fundamental change to our electoral system without most of the electorate informed about the options and engaged in the decision for change.**

- Many people are uncomfortable speaking about electoral reform because there are few people who are educated on the subject. Even those who were knowledgeable felt uneasy because of the possibility that electoral reform could take place without having as many Canadians as possible up to date on the issue. Additionally, the fact that only a very small percentage of Canadians are aware of this consultation brings about the concern that conversations about electoral reform cannot be entirely effective with so few individuals involved. Many participants felt that an awareness campaign and more efforts to educate the public would have been best ahead of the consultation so that the most informed decisions could be made.
- With respect to education, participants were in support of improving the quality of high school civics class in order to ensure that youth are far more educated on the democratic process. This recommendation was also made in the interest of increasing voter turnout among youth and creating a culture of democratic engagement that starts from an early age.
- The general sentiment was that First Past the Post is an outdated system that does not reflect the increasing diversity in opinion that exists in Canada. Canadians are interested in electing officials who closely align with their ideas and will work collaboratively with their colleagues to chart a broader platform for the country. To this end, the majority of participants indicated that they would like a more proportional system. Support was voiced for a Proportional Representation system and the Mixed Member Proportional system as a means of improving the level of representation in government as it corresponds with the popular vote. However, some participants do not support these systems because of the risk of creating gridlock in the House of Commons.
- Many participants expressed support for online voting because of the benefits of accessibility and increased voter turnout, but there were grave concerns noted about security risks and opportunities to influence voters. Voting at the polls is seen as a personal activity and a last undisturbed chance to reflect on one's vote before casting a ballot.
- During the town hall an interesting question was posed about which political system would best support Canada's federation. Participants indicated that since Mixed Member Proportional electoral systems register all the political opinions across the country, this system would be the best option to strengthen federalism.
- During the last election there was much discussion on engaging ethnic groups and individuals who do not speak English in the democratic process and increasing voter turnout among these groups. Unfortunately, many participants felt that efforts were not made to address this and no support or resources were provided to make this happen.
- Bearing in mind that the government has promised to reform the electoral system before the next general election, participants shared concerns about how much time the government has to reform the electoral system to achieve this goal.



<b>Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)</b>	<b>Date:</b> Friday, October 14, 2016
 <b>MP's signature:</b>	Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament – Davenport <b>(Name)</b>