

NATHANIEL ERSKINE-SMITH
BEACHES-EAST YORK

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



NATHANIEL ERSKINE-SMITH
BEACHES-EAST YORK

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)
Oct 12, 2016	7pm-9pm	St Brigid's School - 50 Woodmount Ave, Toronto	200
<p>Format:</p> <p>Presentations from guest speakers, moderated panel discussion, and question and answer session facilitated by the moderator.</p> <p>The panel was moderated by MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jane Hilderman, Executive Director, Samara Canada, - Dennis Pilon, Professor of Political Science at York University - MP Mark Holland (Ajax), Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Democratic Institutions <p>After brief presentations from the panel, the audience submitted written questions which were put to the panel through the moderator. Audience members also had an opportunity to speak to MP Erskine-Smith after the panel discussion had concluded, and constituents were invited to submit ideas through email as well.</p>			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
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)

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>

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

While a number of participants supported our current voting system, a strong majority of participants did not feel that their votes are fairly translated under our current system.

Other participants raised additional concerns with our current system, including that it:

- Does not encourage consensus building. For example:
 - “In our party system, so much of the parliamentary discussion breaks down on 'For' and 'Against' positions. This does not provide for discussions aimed at consensus building on an issue by issue basis. How can election reform address this issue?” - Andy and Marilyn M.
- Encourages strategic voting. For example:
 - “Canadians should feel free to vote for party that they believe best meets their unique needs, should encourage greater voter turnout.” - The T. family
- Does not accurately reflect representation by population as much as it should. For example:
 - “To make 'each vote count' you need fair & equal representation by population. Despite adding ridings in 2015, we still don't have 'rep by pop'. Municipalities are under represented. PR will not change this inequality. What is the committee doing to fix this?” - Charles B.

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)

A number of different alternatives were discussed and presented in sample ballot form to the audience, including alternative voting, list proportional representation, mixed-member proportional representation, and single transferable voting.

Other systems were also suggested by participants, including “near-winner” proportional representation, a hybrid of different electoral systems in urban vs. rural areas, and maintaining the number of current seats but giving MPs different voting weight to make their power proportional to the popular vote.

Based on our town hall’s exit survey and our overall intake of correspondence on this issue, MMPR is clearly the favoured system among those who have a stated preference, and STV is supported second. Many who support MMPR also support ranked ballots within that system. For example:

- “[We should adopt] a blend of ranked and proportional representation. The advantage of ranked is that you always have the best/most popular representative of each locality. The advantage of proportional is that Parliament as a whole best represents all Canadians. There is an easy way to meet both ideals: make ballots for MP ranked.” - Becky L.

Regardless of specific systems, a very strong majority of participants and constituents favour adopting some version of PR. Proponents of some form of PR have organized effective constituent correspondence campaigns.

With respect to specific features, participants indicated that the following factors are important:

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

- Greater proportionality between voter intentions and the balance of power in the legislature. Again, a strong majority of feedback through the town hall and correspondence support this factor.
- A strong regional representation and a local connection to voters. For example:
 - “Regional representation is also important, and we should always have an MP assigned to our geographic region.” - Chris R.
 - “I support MMPR - mixed member proportional representation because it maintains something I do wish to maintain - local connection to our Federal Member of Parliament.” - Leanne M.
- A system that encourages co-operation and consensus building, and the enhanced participation of women and minorities as political representatives. For example:
 - “I have lived in other countries where forms of PR have been implemented and find that The various PR systems (stv, mmp) allow for every vote to count, encourage consensus building across various political parties and positions, and can allow for the enhanced participation of women and minorities as political representatives.” Sara E.
- An open list system, in the event that some version of PR is adopted. There is a general consensus that parties are important, but that they already exercise a sufficient degree of control.

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)

A small number of participants raised concerns about accessibility issues, and there is no question that our elections should be accessible to all voters. There was broad agreement that:

- Elections Canada should enable voters to cast ballots at any polling station in a given riding.
- The day of an election should be a holiday, to encourage greater participation.

Through correspondence, a number of constituents have raised the issue of expat voting rights. All correspondence on this issue has been strongly in favour of restoring the rights of Canadians living abroad to vote in federal elections. For example, one constituent wrote:

- “I voted for the Liberals in the past election in part because of your party’s commitment to respecting Section 3 of the constitution which states: “3. Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of the members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.” You will note that there is no qualification with respect to residency. Please support their right to vote.” - Allen J.

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

There were mixed views on mandatory voting, and it was not discussed in great detail.

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
 131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
 Tel./tél.: 613-992-3150 Fax/télécoeur: 613-947-3089 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

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 discussed. A majority of participants and those who gave feedback support the idea of electronic voting, provided that the government can guarantee security. For example:

- “I hope, too, that secure electronic voting from our home has serious consideration for environmental (save trees), political (quick decision-making) and personal fulfillment (maybe increase Voter participation – could / should we fine Non-voters, like Australia?).” - Wayne C.
- “I like the idea of electronic voting. We had this in our municipal vote, and it was very easy. However, I am quite concerned about the possibility of hacking. We would need very strong security (is that even possible these days?). I do think that putting the election on a holiday or a weekend would be a substantial improvement. More advanced voting options also makes it easy. If we had those two, I am not sure electronic voting would be necessary - and I am concerned about hacking.” - Tom S.

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

Some constituents have advocated for a referendum. For example:

- “It is my view, like many who have already made electoral reform, that it must be brought to vote by all citizens. The government and other elected members can form the proposed ideas, but all Canadians of age must agree by a national vote. All other nations have followed this procedure and I trust Canada will do the same. To do otherwise would be undemocratic!” Stephen P.
- “I am writing as one of your constituents to strongly oppose your government's proposal to change the electoral system without a referendum. As you are aware, the system of voting in Canada has been in effect for over a century and has served us well. In particular, I object to your party's move to change such a fundamental part of Canadian democracy without receiving approval from the people of the country.” Roger P.

There's a general consensus that the process must not only be a legitimate one, but also be perceived as one by Canadians. However, the view that a referendum is necessary is a small minority of the correspondence and feedback our office has received on electoral reform.

Others prefer that parliamentarians study the issue and make a decision. For example:

- “Meet your government's commitment to change the system. This means no referendum before implementation - promise one after we have had a few years experience with whatever system you choose” Bob K.
- “You asked my for my views on "an appropriate process" to bring this about. I think the consultations across the country are great. I do not favour a referendum! I feel that the whole issue of electoral reform is so very complex and requires considerable study. That study is being done by the parliamentary committee, which

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

will then take its findings to parliament. It is up to parliament to decide.” Aby and Bob R.

- “Say NO to a referendum on Electoral Reform.....please! I prefer my elected representatives to work it out. Seems good moves have already been made through multi party discussion.” Elizabeth M.

Many believe that the committee’s recommendations represent the fairest process, provided that a consensus can be reached there, given no party has a majority on the committee. Others raised the possibility of a supermajority vote in the House of Commons. The underlying concern on both accounts is that the Liberal government does not unilaterally change our electoral system to its own benefit.

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

To summarize, the feedback and key recommendations from participations and constituents are:

- 1) The government should follow through on its commitment that 2015 will be the last election under FPTP.
- 2) The correspondence we received, as well as the exit survey from our October 12 town hall, overwhelmingly favoured MMPR among those with a stated preference. There are also many people who are undecided as between MMPR and STV, but want some form of PR. The general consensus is that FPTP is outdated, and that any new electoral system must both ensure proportionality, and maintain effective local representation.
- 3) A referendum is not required, but Canadians must trust in the legitimacy of the process. That means that the Liberal government cannot unilaterally take action without support from outside of its own caucus, whether that means gaining support from other parties through the committee process, or through a vote in the House of Commons.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 14, 2016

MP’s signature:



Nathaniel Erskine-Smith

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.

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