

ANDY FILLMORE, MP
HALIFAX

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

ANDY FILLMORE, DÉPUTÉ
HALIFAX

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. October 11	5:30-7:30pm	Halifax, NS	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 type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Two round table discussions (11 tables)			
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) x – engagement, transparency, Indigenous affairs, voting age

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)

Participants had varying views on our current system, but the obvious majority were dissatisfied with it.

Common reasons for dissatisfaction included:

The volume of so-called "wasted votes," the common practice of strategic voting, the worry of vote splitting, and the way in which it creates a highly partisan environment, disadvantages non-major parties and candidates, as well as minorities like women and Indigenous peoples, and benefits parties that raise the most funds.

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

Among the minority of positive views were: that the system is easy to understand and familiar to Canadians, that it creates stability by often electing majority governments, that it includes a direct connection between constituents and a local representative, that it allows for independent MPs to be elected, and that it is more likely to accommodate a change in government.

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)

The following alternatives were discussed: proportional representation, ranked ballot, single transferable vote, and mixed member proportional.

A few participants suggested a referendum is necessary to change the current system.

The three features participants most commonly identified as being important in an electoral system were: a desire for a system which increases collaboration between parties, a system which reduces or eliminates “wasted votes,” and a system which maintains local representation.

Other features included: simplicity, ease of implementation, diversity, proportionality, accessibility, accountability, respect for the urban/rural divide, equality, and fairness, especially with regards to campaign financing and spending limits.

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)

Yes. The following reasons were provided for why Canadians do not engage in the democratic process: social pressure not to vote, a culture of apathy, a stigma around politicians (that they are “just in it for themselves”), a lack of accountability, poor quality of media reporting, corporate influence in politics, “useless political banter” and hyper partisanship, a lack of education in school, a lack of knowledge about candidates, time restraints on voting times (too few voting days, not enough advance polling locations), accessibility issues, a feeling that their vote won’t make a difference, a lack of advertising on the ways to vote, long wait times to vote, a complicated voting process, ID required to vote, financial restraints to vote, a lack of awareness of policy, and a sense that federal issues don’t have as large an impact on the daily lives of Canadians compared to issues in the municipal and provincial realm.

Among the ideas provided to increase participation in Canadian democracy were: lowering the voting age, improving processes to influence government between elections, increasing education on political systems and processes, holding more upstream consultations for decision making, making every vote count, fostering technology innovation such as an app to keep Canadians up to speed on government decisions, instituting mandatory voting, increasing public funding, improving the dissemination of information, lessening the financial barriers to participation, shortening campaign periods, creating a tax credit or other financial incentives for voting, eliminating unnecessary voter ID requirements, increasing the number of voting methods, requiring “clean” campaigns and repercussions for parties that go negative, increasing resources to Elections Canada so they can educate the public on how to vote, seeking greater consensus through more “direct democracy,” allowing more free votes, enhancing transparency in government spending, increasing voting times and places, and improving accessibility.

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

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ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

Participants were very divided on the question of mandatory voting, with nearly every table offering pros and cons for each.

Those in favour of mandatory voting noted that it is important to include an option to “spoil” one’s ballot. They argued in favour of mandatory voting because it will increase participation in democracy and hold people accountable to the society of which they are part.

Those against felt that it would lead to many uninformed votes being cast, and also noted that it is likely not enforceable.

It was suggested by several participants that incentives – such as financial incentives – might be a better way to increase voter turnout.

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)

Participants were divided about online voting, with many tables offering arguments both in support and against.

Those in favour noted that it would make voting easier, increase turnout especially among young people, and would reduce time constraints associated with in-person voting. Many in favour noted the system must be secure before being activated.

Those against worried that the online system would not be secure, could be hacked and might compromise the privacy of voters as well as the legitimacy of the count.

Many participants noted that in-person voting should still exist regardless of whether or not online voting is permitted.

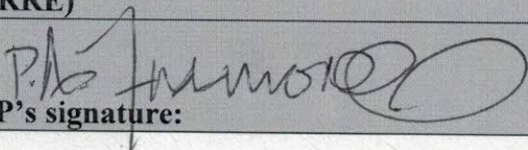
Were any other major topics raised by the participants? (i.e. referendum, women/minority representation, accessibility, voter turnout etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

A small minority of participants requested a referendum on electoral reform. Several participants demonstrated a desire for increased participation of Indigenous peoples in government, with a few suggesting that seats be dedicated to Indigenous peoples specifically. Voter age was brought up frequently, with several participants identifying 16 as an appropriate voting age. The subject of offering financial incentives for voting was controversial among participants, but was brought forward several times.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: Oct. 13 / 16

MP's signature:



(Name)

Andy Filmore

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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