

PAT FINNIGAN, MP
MIRAMICHI - GRAND LAKE

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

PAT FINNIGAN, DÉPUTÉ
MIRAMICHI – GRAND LAKE

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, 2016	12:35-1:35	JAMES M HILL High School	19 (plus 2 employees)
2. October 12, 2016	6 PM – 8:30 PM	Rodd Miramichi	23 (plus 4 employees)
3.			
4.			
<p>Form: X Use of the Library of Parliament’s visual presentation X Presentation from the MP’s office - opening <input type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker X Other (please specify):</p> <p>As part of the MP’s strategy for the dialogue on Electoral Reform, he identified the importance of having input from youth, <u>our future voters</u>. As a result an Electoral Reform dialogue was held with a Rotary Interact Club/World Issues class of grade 12 students. This group included international students from Mexico, Germany and China. Interact Clubs are sponsored by their local Rotary Club and gives students ages 12-18 the chance to make a real difference while having fun. Every Interact club carries out two service projects a year: one that helps their school or community and one that promotes international understanding. The community session brought two high school students out as well as a second year student from University de Moncton studying political science.</p> <p>The session involved using the Library of Parliament visual presentation, a welcome and opening from the MP Pat Finnigan followed by a presentation of key topics and small work out groups to discuss and report back at large. Handout of facts relating to districts and voter turnout were used.</p>			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: X	Replacement of the current voting system: X	Voter turnout: X	Accessibility and inclusiveness: <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat
Mandatory voting: X	Online voting: X	Local representation: X	Other (please specify and describe below) X Importance of Education

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 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)

There was discussion with the student group on the fact that they were not at all informed of the current electoral process and even though some would be voting in a municipal election locally they simply understand that who ever gets the most votes will win. Currently they indicated there is a Political Science course in the system but it is optional. The community session got into why are we trying to change the system, as every system will have flaws. They wanted to understand who made the decision that the system had to change and to that they wanted to know if a referendum would be done to ensure everyone could have a say. The **benefits** described by participants were more stable, simpler than other methods, easy to understand, leads to majority governments allowing government to govern, less minority government, guarantees local representation, fewer party choices, representation is voted directly by the voters and it minimizes influence of fringe/radicals. The **flaws** described by participants were minority has no voice, need more than a two party system, need some representation from marginalized parties, may discourage voting, divides, fractured representation, limits or does not reflect changing sociality thinking, does not favour voter turnout, promotes strategic voting, leaves regions/areas without a voice in government, can have elected reps who win less than half of the votes. On the question regarding if the **votes were fairly translated** comments were provided that it is expected that the candidate who wins would represent all citizens in their district not only the ones who voted for them. MP Pat Finnigan shared his perspective on this in regards to his concern for all members of his district and that his office is there for everyone to access. It was discussed that some folks don't vote because they don't want either of the two larger parties and so their vote wouldn't make a difference.

2. 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)

All alternatives were presented facilitated by the use of videos and a discussion took place on Proportional Representation (PR) systems and Alternative Voting (AV) or ranked ballots. Time did not permit the group to input into benefits and flaws of the Mixed Member systems but understood it was a combination of the Plurality/Majority and Proportional Representation Systems. The understanding of the Alternative Vote and ranked ballot seemed clear and that it would result in a candidate receiving at least 50% of the vote share. Concerns were raised overall as to how this would support diversity. For the Proportional Representation System there were mixed comments on redistribution of seats based on vote share and also the resizing of districts to create local representation and regional representation. There were many comments on the concept of Party list as to which makes up the list and how local representation would be safeguarded. The **benefits of PR** were noted as number of votes would reflect the number of seats, favours voting for the party and the candidate, would require a lot of new forums/public meetings to understand, opens new doors and would include entire population. The **flaws of PR** were too complicated, too many parties, reduce voter turnout, ambiguous, takes power from voters and gives to parties, takes away local regional reps, does not favour majority government, voting could be difficult if uneducated, change in system/open-mindedness, costs a lot of money to change. The **benefits of AV and ranked ballots** were feel vote will count, feel less marginalized, winner will have 50% or more of the vote and more representative of the voters choice, member still a local representative, keeps it simple, similar to candidate convention. The **flaws of the AV and ranked ballot** are it divides among party lines, further promotes strategic voting, voters might feel it is too complicated, more difficult for minorities to get seats, voting for candidate rather than the party, and you could end up voting for a party that does not represent your values.

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3. 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)

The demographic of the community group discussed reasons why people engaged in the past regarding being able to get a job or support to get a job. They indicated that today it is hard to get volunteers, as the interest isn't the same as it used to be. The facts on the higher turnout in the 1950's spurred this conversation. The student session indicated that more education is needed. They felt it should be mandatory to have a course on Electoral systems so that they could be better informed when it comes time to vote. It was also felt that overall their needs to be more education on ways to vote and how to learn about parties and their choices. There is not enough information provided to citizens. The public session supported as well the need for more education and agreed with the students that a mandatory course should be in the school system. Concerns were raised about long line-ups, problems not being on the voter list or having the correct ID. Other comments were that some people turn off politics and are not taking an interest. It was cited that more education and sharing of the past WW I and II where people fought for our country and our freedoms could bring a deeper meaning to citizens to increase engagement.

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

The student session was strongly against any mandatory voting and felt it would have a counter effect if one were forced to vote. They felt it was more important to focus on education of the current system and increase the word on where and how to vote. The public sessions felt likewise, and were against mandatory voting. They felt citizens need to value the right to vote and more education and awareness in how they are governed would support a much higher turnout. It was also expressed that our younger population needs to better understand the past to gain an appreciation for the privilege and freedom to vote.

5. 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 student session was not in favour of online voting unless the security issues were strong and confidence was in place to assure voters that their information is private. They felt it would contribute to a much higher turnout due to the convenience. Their concerns were more around the fact that no one seems to know about all the current ways to vote. They expressed strongly that it should be easy and accessible. The public session was all in favour of online as an additional way to vote. It was expressed that many seniors would not be comfortable with online voting. When the question of security was raised, it was felt that this should be possible given where we are with technology today. It was felt by both groups that there is not enough understanding of the existing ways to vote in the current system. Both groups were enlightened of existing ways to vote. The one that stood out was that directly following the election citizens could go to their local electoral office and cast their vote. Statistics on a Labour Market Survey completed November 2015 on **Reasons for not voting, all non-voters, youth and aboriginal living off-reserve, 2015 federal election** was shared with the group. The categories of everyday life, political reasons, electoral process-related and other could all be address with more education and every citizen taking a responsibility to share the message to support and assist people to get out and vote. Candidates and parties can do more to ensure all citizens understand their candidates and what they and their parties can do for their districts and the country overall.

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

Some members in closing wanted to take a vote on who preferred which system. This was difficult for many participants, as more details regarding the implications of any change would need to be better understood. Here is a capture of the people who felt comfortable to express a vote: FPTP – 6, Alternative Vote and ranked ballot -- 8, and the Proportional Representation -- 2.

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

Recommendation 1 public school system- The public school system needs to consider a mandatory course on electoral systems and integrate it from grade 9 on to instill a sense of responsibility for youth to value their voting privileges and gain confidence in their independent knowledge of not just local representation but of parties and government overall. With globalization it is critical that all citizens gain knowledge of how our country, province and local communities are governed.

Recommendation 2 Engagement/participation – All districts needs to create multiple platforms to education people on the ways to vote and how to access information on candidates and parties so they are comfortable with the voting process. Every polling station should have town halls and on-going coffee breaks to allow people to learn and engage in voting. It would help if everyone took a responsibility to encourage, motivate citizens in each of their districts to vote.

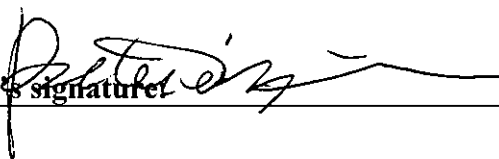
Recommendation 3 Young voters Awareness campaign –Consider a Young voters awareness campaign so that people who are afraid to ask questions, can. One comment from a student indicated that sometimes they couldn't have those conversations within their families and friends as they are just told who to vote for. Young citizens need to feel informed, to engage and a mechanism to ensure information and questions can be answered from all age groups, underrepresented groups etc. would improve the current situation.

Recommendation 4 Ways of voting -Introduce online voting as another way to vote **in addition** to the current ways. Do not bring in mandatory voting.

Recommendation 5 Comprehensive communication and education strategy on any change to current FPTP – The participants felt strongly that if any **change** is made to the current system that a comprehensive communication and education strategy is critical. This strategy needs to reach everyone and be accessible so all citizens can fully understand any revised Electoral System.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13, 2016

MP's signature 

Pat Finnigan, Member of Parliament (Name)

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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