

House of Commons

Rhéal Éloi Fortin
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Saint-Jérôme, October 13, 2016

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia
Chair of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform
131 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Sir,

On October 6, I held a day of public consultations on electoral reform as part of the initiative launched by the Honourable Mariam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions.

I had the opportunity to listen to the constituents of my riding and had discussions with them regarding the various issues surrounding electoral reform.

I am very pleased to submit to you the *Townhall Report on Electoral Reform Public Consultation* duly completed following the animated and educational exchanges that took place in Rivière-du-Nord.

Sincerely,

Rhéal E. Fortin
MP for Rivière-du-Nord
Acting Leader of the Bloc Québécois

**RHÉAL FORTIN
RIVIÈRE-DU-NORD**

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



**RHÉAL FORTIN
RIVIÈRE-DU-NORD**

**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)
October 6, 2016	9 am (3 hours)	Hôtel de région, 161 Rue de la Gare, Saint- Jérôme, Quebec – Room A	31
October 6, 2016	1:30 pm (3 hours and 30 minutes)		
October 6, 2016	6:30 pm (2 hours and 30 minutes)		
Form: <input checked="" 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: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Replacement of the current voting system: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Voter turnout: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility and inclusiveness: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory voting: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Online voting: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local representation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify and describe below) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - Party lines - Importance of a referendum on electoral reform

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> <p>The opinion of a very large majority of the participants was that the current electoral system has major deficiencies and could be improved, but it should not be replaced at any cost using a voting system that is even worse than the one we are currently using.</p> <p>The participants often feel that their vote is not reflected in the electoral results. It was mentioned several times that 61% of the voters voted for a political party other than the one in power and in the same line of thought, it was mentioned that the government, which exercises 100% of the</p>

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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

executive power, was chosen by only 39% for the electorate.

According to a majority of them, a proportional system might ensure a better match between the choice of voters and the electoral results.

The participants also unanimously stated that a preferential system would be a clear step backwards and that if this system was the alternative, it would be best to stay with the first past the post system.

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)

In response to this question, the vast majority of the participants mentioned that they would prefer a proportional system, a mixed-member proportional system or a compensatory mixed-member proportional system.

Regarding this same question, the participants were unanimous in saying that a preferential electoral system would be the worst voting system and that it would be best to keep the current voting system rather than adopting that type of electoral system.

According to the participants, the primary objective of the electoral system should be to express the equal value of each vote, to be proportional and to represent the demographic diversity of the electorate. It must also be a confidential and secure system while promoting voter participation.

Lastly, according to the participants, the electoral system should encourage better participation between the MPs, reducing party lines and the influence of the various lobbies.

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)

Among the reasons mentioned by the participants to explain the lack of participation in the electoral process, two subjects came up on a regular basis: the people's cynical view of politics and the lack of representation from the results.

They also mentioned, although to a lesser extent, the non-proportional nature of the current system, the low civic mindedness of voters, the lack of awareness among voters and low demographic representation (men/women/language, etc.).

In the same line of thought, many believe that electoral participation could be increased through a better voting system (proportional) and voter education.

Some also mentioned that online voting and mandatory voting could be possibilities and should be discussed.

Lastly, it was mentioned that changing the structure of Government and parliamentary culture could help and that having electoral reforms approved by referendum would provide greater credibility and would help increase voter confidence.

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

There does not appear to be a consensus on this issue. In fact, one half of the participants said they were in favour of mandatory voting while the other half said they were against it.

It should also be noted that regardless of the opinion expressed by the participants, they were either strongly in favour of it or strongly against it.

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Those against it referred to the right to abstain as a form of expressing their intent and those who were in favour mentioned civic duty, referring to other actions that are mandatory, such as paying taxes.

The majority of the participants agreed that voter education would certainly be more effective than mandatory voting.

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)

A majority of the participants were in favour of online voting, but they did express reservations. They expressed the importance of having certain rules in place or precautions that should be taken into account. They also said that online voting should be accessible, but that it should not be mandatory for everyone.

Certain fears were expressed regarding the security needed to ensure the integrity of the electoral process and the impartiality of those participating in the management of such a voting tool.

There was also a minority point of view that if online voting was not possible, perhaps a first step would be to have electronic voting at the polling stations.

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

One concern was expressed several times: having the House of Commons recognize political parties. Approximately one out of every two participants expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation.

Among the proposed solutions to this problem, other than the implementation of a proportional type voting system, it was mentioned that the recognition of the political parties should be based on a percentage of votes, something that would begin with the election of the first MP in the House of Commons.

The participants also discussed the problems caused by party lines, the need to review the role of MPs and the need to encourage the forming of coalition governments.

Several participants emphasized the importance of holding a referendum to approve any reform of the electoral system.

Lastly, some mentioned that electoral reform might be a good opportunity to also reform the process for being appointed to the Senate, the way it operates, or its relevance.

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

Spread out over three meetings taking place the same day in order to encourage the residents of the riding of Rivière-du-Nord to participate, this consultation was an opportunity to hear various points of view and exchange ideas with voters regarding their voting experiences as well as their perception of the current voting system and the improvements they would like to see made to it.

The participants expressed that they felt that the voting system currently being used in Canada is outdated. Everyone agreed that a modernization of the voting system might be a good idea, but not at any cost. There was a strong preference for a proportional type system. It was often stated that votes and electoral results never match, resulting in a deficiency in terms of parliamentary and

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governmental legitimacy.

In order to promote better representation among our MPs, a strong majority of the participants expressed being in favour of a proportional voting system with a variety of variants. The preferential election system was unanimously seen as being inadequate and unacceptable.

On the issue of mandatory voting, the opinions were equally divided in favour and against such a measure, whereas a majority of the participants were open to online voting, expressing the importance however that it not be the only means of voting and ensuring the impartiality and security of the process and those who would be responsible for it.

Many indicated that it was important for there to be more voter education regarding governance and electoral participation. Such a measure would be more beneficial than having mandatory voting.

Many said they were dissatisfied with the little consideration given to their vote by the House of Commons rules for recognizing political parties and they proposed that political parties be recognized the moment they elect their first MP, expressed as the percentage of electoral support received by a political party.

It must also be pointed out that the participants expressed the need to have any electoral reform legitimized by the approval of Canadians through a referendum.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13, 2016

MP's signature:

Rhéal Fortin, R-d-N

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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