MARILÈNE GILL
MANICOUAGAN

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

MARILÈNE GILL
MANICOUAGAN

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

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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. Oct. 26, 2015	5:21 pm to 7:15 pm	Sept-Îles	15
2. Oct. 7, 2015	5:25 pm to 7:18 pm	Baie-Comeau	14
3.			
4.			

Form: x Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation
      x Presentation from the MP's office
      x Open microphone
      x Question and answer session
      x Guest speaker
      x Other (please specify):

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

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)
The people who participated in the consultations are dissatisfied with the way members of Parliament are elected. People in attendance were unanimous in saying that their votes were not represented correctly by the number of seats. They believe it is unacceptable for a government to be able to have a majority of the seats without obtaining a majority of the popular vote. They also said that the party for which they had voted was under-represented in the House of Commons, compared with the percentage of votes it had obtained in the election. Thus, the general impression is that votes can sometimes be wasted, lost or quite simply not taken into consideration. Lastly, they said that in the current system, alternation of the two main parties was rooted in the very mechanism of the system and this consequently forced people to vote more "against" something

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131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

than "for" something.

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)
It was reiterated emphatically that it was necessary to adopt a voting system that was simple to use and understand. Participants said they were concerned that it would be terribly complicated for voters to understand the new voting system. It appeared that the government had a duty to ensure that the functioning of the proposed new electoral system, if voting system reform were introduced, was sufficiently and correctly explained to the public. In fact, it would take time to provide average people with sufficient and understandable information so that they were properly informed. This should be part of the reform process, even if several phases were necessary. The credibility of the process and the legitimacy of the reforms depended on it.

Participants also believed it was necessary to choose a system that represented local interests (municipalities) and regional interests (ridings) while incorporating proportionality within a perspective of dynamic occupation of the territory. In a similar vein, they said that if a compensatory mixed proportional system was the selected voting system, it would be necessary to think about increasing the number of members of Parliament. They concluded that "a change [in the voting system] for which people are not prepared is unthinkable."

The issue of regional representation raised a tremendous amount of concern. Participants were afraid that changes to the voting system, particularly the introduction of pure proportional representation, would cause Quebec's regions to lose their representative characteristics in the sense that they would find themselves with a representative from outside the riding, who would know little or nothing about the reality of the constituents. One participant said that any changes would probably benefit the cities at the expense of the regions.

Lastly, participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the party line principle. They said that members of Parliament should be accountable to their riding constituents who elected them and not to their party. They wanted to see a form of proximity governance established in order to encourage and achieve a closer relationship between elected representatives and their constituents. |

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)
Participants in the meeting asked questions about the low participation of Innu and Naskapi First Nations in the electoral process, but did not put forward any solutions. (In that regard, see the answer to the following question.)

Participants said they believed that changes to the voting system would include a proportional component that would probably encourage young people to participate in the electoral process. They would probably see themselves better reflected in a more equitable composition of the House of Commons.

It was also suggested that elections be held on Sunday rather than on Mondays, and that advance voting be better promoted to enable a maximum number of people to vote. |

Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)
Participants were unanimously opposed to the option of mandatory voting: "If voting is made

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mandatory, it would be an authoritarian measure that violates citizens' rights."

Participants also expressed concerns that mandatory voting might lead to more "blindfolded" voting. People who did little to inform themselves about politics or who were isolated from politics, and who had a poor understanding of the voting system, would be inclined to vote randomly.

However, some participants expressed irreconcilable disagreement with that position because they believed that voting in a democracy was a civic duty.

Participants said that mandatory voting would in a way force a number of Aboriginal people to legitimize a system that a number of them considered illegitimate. In other words, the political culture of the First Nations was different from that of Canada, and therefore First Nations people should not be made to participate in a political process in which they did not recognize themselves and in which they had negligible representation.

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)

In general, participants were opposed to the possibility of online voting. They were afraid that breakdowns would hamper the electoral process and that elderly people would have difficulty using the service. One participant said, "I have two sisters who do not know how a computer works."

Participants said they were afraid that this practice would make it easier to commit electoral fraud of various types. One participant said that in the early 2000s, electronic voting had been attempted in Quebec municipal elections and that this had caused numerous problems. Another participant gave the example of the chaotic recounting of votes in the United States during the presidential elections in 2000. In general, participants expressed their attachment to the current voting procedures, and said that they were participating in a ritual that had a certain decorum and important symbolism.

Participants said they were concerned that this would open up an opportunity for dummy voting and vote buying. Some participants said that they might even be tempted to vote several times to "help" a fellow citizen.

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

Changes to House of Commons procedure
Manicouagan constituents want members of Parliament to be given more resources to be able to properly carry out their duties. They would therefore like to see a reform of the rule of recognition of political parties in the House. One participant said, "If our representative does not have the right to speak, what is the purpose of a representative? Are we citizens who are worth less than other citizens?" "It is a denial of democracy [sic]" said a participant about the system for assigning opportunities to speak to members of Parliament, including those of parties not recognized in the House. He believed that granting less importance and fewer opportunities to speak to some members of Parliament made the people who voted for them second-class citizens.

Changes to political party financing
Participants were in favour of re-establishing public funding for political parties. This would ensure a relative degree of fairness between the recognized parties and small or new unrecognized parties, and the people who vote for them.

Referendum

A majority of participants are opposed to any major changes being made to the voting system without holding a referendum.

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

- Participants in the consultations said they wanted the same resources allocated to all members of Parliament so that they can fairly represent their constituents.
- Participants said there was a consensus in favour of making changes to the voting system.
- Participants were in favour of a compensatory mixed proportional system if changes were made to the voting system.
- Participants wanted to see a referendum held if the government was willing to make changes to the voting system and proposed a new voting system.
- Participants were opposed to online voting.
- Participants were opposed to mandatory voting.
- Participants called for the re-establishment of public funding for political parties.
- Participants wanted their ideas to be listened to and heard.
- Participants felt that any changes had to be implemented in an orderly manner and that the necessary time to implement them should be taken. Additional steps were necessary following the consultations (referendums, information sessions) to achieve a consensus and legitimize the process.
- Participants were open to a change in the political culture that would increase the weight of their votes.
- Participants suggested that the vote for Prime Minister be separate from the vote for members of Parliament.
- Participants agreed that young people should participate more in the electoral process and that this should be a major concern.
- The electoral reform was not taking First Nations into account.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)	Date: October 13, 2016
MP's signature: *signed*	Marilène Gill Member of Parliament for Manicouagan

NOTE ON THE METHODLGY

This report was drafted by two employees of Marilène Gill, Member of Parliament for Manicouagan. During the two sessions of consultations held in the two most populated centres of the riding covering an area of 260 000 km^2, i.e. Sept-Iles and Baie-Comeau, these two employees of the Parliament Hill office were present to take notes in order to obtain an accurate and objective record of what was said during the discussions.

Marilène Gill, Member of Parliament for Manicouagan, attended both consultation sessions.
Luc Thériault, Member of Parliament for Montcalm, House leader of the Bloc Québécois party and member of the Special Committee on Democratic Reform, was the guest speaker. Participants discussed freely as the presentation was given and were able to summarize what they had to say by answering five questions at the end of meeting. Because the notes were taken in chronological order, the note-takers grouped the participants' submissions and ideas by topic in order to comply with the framework suggested by the Special Committee and make them easier for readers to understand. Lastly, what was said by political staffers and members of Parliament present was purposely omitted to leave room for the people, the source of all legitimate authority.

The handwritten notes on which this report is based are stored in the Parliament Hill office of Marilène Gill, Member of Parliament for Manicouagan.

Reports must be submitted to the Clerks of the Committee no later than Friday, October 14, 2016 in both official languages.

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