

MARK HOLLAND,
MP FOR AJAX



MARK HOLLAND,
DÉPUTÉ D'AJAX

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

| 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. 20/07/2016 | | 95 Magill Dr, Ajax, ON L1T 3K7 | 140 |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> |

| 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 various options for democratic reform were outlined in the Library of Parliament PowerPoint presentation and presented by MP Holland. The opinions for this question were very diverse. Constituents argued that the current system does not reflect the political reality of a multi-party system that is in our current electoral reality. Many participants voiced their desire to see improvements made to the current system as there was concern from many participants that votes were 'wasted' in the current system. Some argued that FPTP creates a polarised system and they would like to see more options that could have MPs work together more collaboratively and noted how difficult that is under the current rules. Very few people argued in favour of keeping the current system as it exists as it is viewed as unfair, unrepresentative, and no longer reflects political the political reality of the 21st century. Several people pointed out that the current system was designed for the British parliament several centuries ago.</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

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)

Many alternatives to the current First Past The Post were discussed. As was reviewed in the slides people argued in favour of Single-Transferable-Vote, Alternate Vote/Ranked Ballot, combinations of the two, and combinations of other systems as well. Universally however the room was in agreement that no one wanted a 'close-list' system that is controlled by parties that determines who is chosen for the House of Commons. People like the idea of having an individual that was held accountable to a local constituency and thought that if an element of proportionality was introduced that anyone chosen for the PR section would have to have run somewhere. Several people mentioned that they liked the idea of smaller, and more parties, being represented in the House of Commons as it brings more voices to the legislative process. There was an incredibly strong desire for whatever system is chosen to be communicated by a strong education campaign that is effective and simple that explains what the current system is, what the changes are, why and how the new system will function.

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)

In regards to why some people choose not to vote some constituents asserted that it is the right of citizens to not vote in favour of any candidate if they are upset with the current political system. Other constituents countered that in their view voters who chose not to vote were viewed as apathetic and not engaged since voters have the option to spoil their ballot. This was also addressed by other speakers who noted that spoiling ballots is not an effective process either as an unintentionally spoiled ballot and intentionally spoiled ballot is reflected in the same tally at the end of election night. These issues were also contributing factors to the discussion on mandatory voting. Ultimately, no one came up with a suggestion on how best to reflect engaged voters that were not happy with a given slate of candidates. However, it was noted that this is an issue that should be examined and a solution created for.

Another method to encourage voting was the suggestion lowering the voting age to 16. This idea was contentious with some arguing that it would allow for school to help inform students through the use of assemblies and all candidates' debates hosted by schools. This would also help create a pattern of voting at a younger age and may incline youth to vote more regularly as they group up. This was countered by constituents arguing that 16 is too young to vote and that students won't be knowledgeable enough to make up their own minds and likely be influenced by their parents. Others contended that such arguments were the same arguments used throughout history to prevent the enfranchisement of women and minorities. The room was split on this issue and not every speaker spoke on this issue.

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

Constituents were divided on the issue of whether or not there should be mandatory balloting. For some they didn't like the idea of being fined if they didn't vote for one of the options because they might not like the current options. Others suggested spoiling the ballot if that was the case, on that point no one argued against as a solution as individuals would still be counted as voted. Some were concerned that if mandatory voting was a reality that it may penalize those who want to vote but are unable to do so because they are elderly, or immobile and therefore might not vote not because

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they don't want to but because they are unable to. At the mention of this the room was agreed more should be done to increase accessibility to voting. Mandatory balloting was an issue that varied from speaker to speaker regardless of whether or not they supported a different voting system.

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)

Voting online was a contentious issue. Some participants argued that they simply wouldn't trust digital voting as issues could occur. This concern was prefaced that while some harboured concern that their system might be hacked the greater concern was that if a bug in the system were to occur this would create an even greater issue and may not be caught until after the election results were finalized. However, these concerns were only for the general population's use of solely digital ballot voting. Many of those who expressed concern over digital balloting also said that digital balloting should be allowed for Canadian's abroad, military service members, and those who are disabled or would otherwise have great difficulty going to a physical voting station. At this point it is important to note that constituents were in favour of greater accuracy that machines could provide in balloting if there was still a physical copy of the ballot that existed that could be checked if necessary and relied upon in the case of a break down in electronics. In this option constituents voiced that so long as machine balloting was simple, straightforward, and verifiable and a physical copy ultimately existed they would be agreeable with Elections Canada exploring that option.

The previous experience in Ajax voting online was mentioned several times in both a positive and negative light. Some arguing that it could have been responsible for the higher voter turnout in Ajax, while others pointed to the long delay in results being tallied.

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

Other major topics that were addressed were referendums, women/minority representation, accessibility, and voter turnout. On the referendum front most speakers voiced their opinions for or against a referendum, with more than half of the speakers voicing outright opposition to a referendum, while others thought if there was a thorough enough consultation process and education campaign a referendum would be unnecessary. Some asked in Parliament was allowed to change how they were elected; while others contended that it should be up to the people to decide how it is done regardless of the rules. This was countered by others arguing that the government ran on this issue and they expect them to carry through with reform and that they have all the authority they need from the last election.

In regards to a women and minority representation it was discussed in structural terms rather than the use of quotas. Most argued that equality could be better achieved with proportionality being applied to our process, or at least an element of proportionality, that could foster greater inclusion. One individual cited New Zealand for example and their use of seats set aside for New Zealand Aboriginals.

As mentioned above there was consensus in the room that Canadians living abroad, military service members, disabled, and the elderly should have the option to vote online or every effort should be made to ensure that they are able to vote if they desire to. This includes doing more than is currently done by Elections Canada.

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

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The Democratic Reform Town Hall in Ajax was attended by around 140 people over a three hour period. It began with MP Holland using the PowerPoint Presentation provided by the Library of Parliament and a review of the five major systems to provide a baseline for the night's discussion. Over 30 people took to the microphone to voice their opinions on a host of topics and they came from as far as Downtown Toronto to Peterborough to voice their opinions.

The opinions that constituents had on the various voting systems were varied. Most agreed at the current system is unrepresentative of the modern Canadian political process. This then led to individuals suggesting a myriad of different systems ranging from the Single-Transferable Vote system suggested in BC, to Alternative Vote or Ranked Ballot, to a complete overhaul with some other form of Proportional Representation, or to the status quo. Interestingly, while the majority of constituents did not support a referendum to change the system those that did argue in favour of a referendum did not all suggest the same reforms.

There did however seem to be consensus in the room that regardless of the decision there needs to be a considerable public education campaign to explain what the current system is, what the changes are and why, and how the new system will function.

Mandatory voting was also addressed with concerns being voiced that some may intentionally choose not to vote since they don't agree with any candidate. Other constituents argued they could spoil their ballots if that is the case. Everyone agreed that if people were unable to vote because they live abroad, are service members, or disabled they shouldn't be penalized and allowing those people to vote online should be examined.

For electronic voting the room was generally skeptical of voting online however examples of other countries that do it were mention, as were the traditional arguments of "if we can bank online, we can vote online". However, most constituents seemed open to the idea of electronic balloting so long as physical copy could be retained for the purpose of verification.

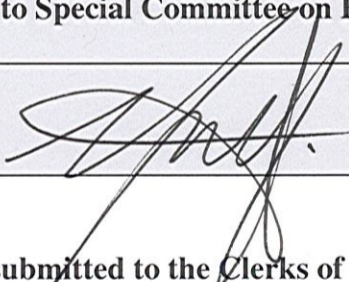
Other ideas that were included in the night were suggestions such as lowering the voting age to 16 and mandating All-Candidates debates be back in the schools in an effort to create a pattern of voting at a younger age. This idea had people argue for and against it.

The Electoral Reform Town Hall was attended by around 140 people over a three hour period in which constituents and individuals from as far away from Toronto and Peterborough voiced their opinions.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: 09/16/2016

MP's signature:



(Name)

Mark Holland

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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