

ANTHONY HOUSEFATHER
MOUNT ROYAL
TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



NOM DU (DE LA) DÉPUTÉ (E)
NOM DE LA CIRCONSCRIPTION

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. September 15, 2016	7:30pm to 9:30pm	Irving Adessky Community Centre, Hampstead, Quebec	18
2.			
3.			
4.			

Form: Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation
 Presentation from the MP's office
 Open microphone
 Question and answer session
 Guest speaker
 Other (please specify): This was essentially a round table with everyone around a table.

I led with a short presentation of the issues and then we had free flow discussion around the table on each subject.

However, please note that I had multiple open assemblies over the summer which attracted far more participants in several cases well over 100 and I did door to door and engaged in numerous discussions with community leaders and elected officials at the municipal and school board level. Democratic reform was raised in those contexts as well and as such I will be offering the views not only of the 18 participants who attended the specific consultation but also the views I heard from a much wider range of constituents.

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"/> Requirement to hold a plebiscite to ratify any change to the electoral system.

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:

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

500 words) Both the vast majority of people at the specific consultation meeting and the vast majority of those who I have spoken with over the summer did not consider a change to the electoral system to be an important issue and most were satisfied with the current system. A handful of people I spoke with over the summer, representing Green Party supporters and Fair Vote Canada felt the current system disenfranchised them and wanted proportional representation but nobody else did. Those who were open to a change to the current system wanted to remain with single member ridings under our current format and either supported preferential ballots or a run off between the top 2 vote getters in the event nobody reached 50% in the first round of elections. The most oft repeated phrase I received was “if it ain’t broke do not fix it” and while people acknowledged that those who supported minority parties within a riding may not feel that their candidate can win, they felt this was offset by the more important goals of having larger parties that incorporated wider chunks of the population and having a single person elected who understood and only served the riding and could be re-elected or voted out based on personal performance.

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) For the vast majority local representation and someone who understood the riding representing it was key. It was also noted that larger ridings would reduce the power of minority groups that were majorities in a riding (for example Quebec’s English speaking community) to elect members that from their own community that would advocate on their behalf. For the small minority representing the Green Party and Fair Vote Canada they identified proportionality as the most important feature. Simplicity in a system was also mentioned as something that was important.

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) We discussed the concept of getting people more involved and it was noted that the only way to really increase the percentage of people who vote in a dramatic way is to make voting mandatory. In terms of getting more interest from those groups who vote less, thoughts were civics education in high school and university and for new citizens would potentially bolster turn out. We had a significant percentage who felt that it was everyone’s democratic right to vote or not to vote and no further efforts needed to be made.

Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words) We had an extensive discussion on this. The feelings were mixed. A small majority were in favour of the Australian approach with nominal fines for those who do not vote but a significant number of people felt that this was not a direction we should go in and felt this should be everyone’s choice and that encouraging those who are not interested to go vote would simply lead to uneducated voters casting ballots for the wrong reasons (such as good looks etc).

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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) We discussed online voting and people were concerned about the security of such a system. Most felt such a system could be tampered with and allow non-voters to vote or people voting twice by having an uninterested friend or family member providing them with their password. So generally people would have no difficulty if it was secure but most felt it would never be secure enough so were opposed.

Were any other major topics raised by the participants? (i.e. referendum, women/minority representation, accessibility, voter turnout etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words) Participants at the consultation and at each discussion I have had throughout the summer have made it clear a referendum should be required in order to effect any change to the electoral system we have used since 1867. The Town of Hampstead a municipality in my riding actually passed a resolution to this effect which we attach. The only people very much against the referendum were ironically enough the small number who supported proportional representation as they claimed that those illegitimate members of parliament they felt were elected under a flawed system should be the only ones determining the change. I found that somewhat ironic. But it seems clear to me that the majority of residents of my riding feel a referendum is required to ratify a proposed change and that the current system needs to be the alternative option to what is being proposed.

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

Recommendations

- 1. That the current system not be changed and that the Government focus on democratizing Parliament and empowering MPs as opposed to a reform of the voting system.**
- 2. That if change is made it remain a one member riding system with the change being either a run off election of the top two vote getters if nobody achieves 50% or a preferential ballot where the votes of the candidates who fall off are redistributed until someone achieves 50%.**
- 3. That proportional representation in any form is a complete non-starter and would lead to a less direct and accountable relationship between an MP and his or her riding**
- 4. That a plebiscite be required in addition to adoption by Parliament of any revised system with the level of majorities nationally and regionally required for adoption, to be made clear before the plebiscite**
- 5. That we consider mandatory voting as one option of increasing turn out.**

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Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)		Date:
MP's signature:	(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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HAMPSTEAD

Extract from the Minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of the Council of the Town of Hampstead held on September 12th, 2016, at the Community Centre, 30 Lyncroft Road, Hampstead, Quebec.

RESOLUTION 2016-238

RESOLUTION ON ELECTORAL REFORM OF THE PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

WHEREAS Canada is a democracy;

WHEREAS Canada has been well-served by the "First Past the Post" system of electing members of Parliament since 1867;

WHEREAS changing the method of electing the members of Parliament is a fundamental change to our form of democracy and should require more than a simple majority vote by the party holding the majority of seats in the House of Commons;

WHEREAS the failure to require more than a simple majority vote by the party in power will lead to a new system that favours the party in power and that is undemocratic and goes against Canadians' sense of fair play;

WHEREAS the fact that there is no legal prohibition on changing the rules for electing members of Parliament does not mean that it is acceptable to do so with merely a simple majority vote;

WHEREAS the Town of Hampstead believes very strongly in democracy;

On motion of Mayor William Steinberg, seconded by Councillor Jack Edery, it was UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

THAT the Town of Hampstead calls upon the Government of Canada to enact legislation to require that any change to the method of electing members of Parliament must be endorsed in a Canada wide referendum and that the new method will only come into effect starting with the second election following the adoption of the new method.

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to our MP, Anthony Housefather, the leaders of all Federal parties, the provincial Premiers and the Mayors of all municipalities on the island of Montreal.

Adopted

(s) William Steinberg _____
Dr. William Steinberg, Mayor

(s) Pierre Tapp _____
M^e Pierre Tapp, Town Clerk

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY, September 13th, 2016

M^e Pierre Tapp, Town Clerk