

GUDIE HUTCHINGS  
LONG RANGE MOUNTAINS

TOWN HALL REPORT  
ON ELECTORAL REFORM  
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

GUDIE HUTCHINGS  
LONG RANGE MOUNTAINS

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 13, 2016	6:30pm – 8:00pm	Corner Brook, NL, Public Library	22
2.			
3.			
4.			
<b>Form:</b> <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 type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Small group discussion followed by open microphone.			
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><b>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)</b></p> <p>There was a general agreement among attendees that the disproportionality between the national vote percentage and the allocation of seats in the House of Commons of our First Past the Post electoral system is an important flaw. Attendees argued their votes were not being translated fairly in to the House of Commons, resulting in many Canadians feeling as though they "lost their vote." Consequently, they felt our current system leads to legislation being passed in the House of Commons that isn't always representative of Canadians views.</p> <p>It was argued that if there was a more proportional system introduced, Canadians would feel more included in the political process, which could in turn, would provide more motivation for Canadians to vote and become engaged.</p>

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Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)  
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

There was also concern that the current electoral system leads to an adversarial approach by parties and Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. Constituents felt that if a less adversarial system were used, there would be a more collaborative approach in the House of Commons.

Lastly, there were concerns that the current system is too vulnerable to the centralization of power in the office of the Prime Minister, harming the ability of Members of Parliament represent their constituents effectively.

**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)**

The discussion began with a presentation of the PowerPoint provided by the Library of Parliament. This presentation included a discussion of numerous alternative voting systems. These systems included alternative vote, list proportional representation, single transferable vote systems, single, non-transferable voting systems, mixed member majority, and mixed member proportional systems.

While these systems were discussed in the presentation, the group conversation centred largely on principles attendees would like to see as the foundation of a new electoral system.

There was general agreement of attendees that any new system should be more proportional than the current first-past-the-post system. It was argued this would help Canadians feel more included and represented in the House of Commons.

However, while seeking more proportionality, constituents also urged that Members of Parliament maintain their "attachment" to a geographic area and to their constituents. There was strong agreement that local knowledge and connection to local constituents is important for Members of Parliament to be effective representatives.

Lastly, attendees would like to see any new system maintain as much of the simplicity of our current system as possible.

**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 reason raised most often for why Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process was a belief that their vote did not matter. There were a number of reasons given for why this could be the case. Many attendees believed it is because of our current winner take all system. Some in attendance argued that our current system leads some Canadians to feel their vote is "lost" and doesn't matter if their chosen candidate does not win.

However, there was also strong agreement that there are many other reasons Canadians choose not to participate. Constituents raised issues such as a lack of information about the candidates in their riding and about policies of the respective political parties. They felt Elections Canada should be more engaged in regulating the information that parties must provide to voters and when it must be provided. There was also general agreement about the negative impact on voter participation of negative advertising and excessive partisanship. Attendees again felt Elections Canada could have more of a role in preventing some of the excessive negative advertising during campaigns.

There was also agreement that Canadians don't feel the debate in the House of Commons does an effective job of representing them. Consequently, they felt that in some cases, getting involved in the political process would not create the change they wish to see in their government. Attendees also encouraged Members of Parliament to be more visible in their communities and to seek

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greater input from their constituents, such as during this national consultation process on electoral reform.

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

In general, there was hesitancy about the proposal to introduce mandatory voting, regardless of the electoral system. Despite the proposed opportunity for voters to spoil their ballot, attendees were uncomfortable with the idea of forcing Canadians to vote.

It was argued by several folks in attendance that mandatory voting was only treating a symptom and would not solve the underlying issues. There was also concern about the ability and cost of enforcing mandatory voting. Instead, several attendees suggested an incentive based 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)**

There was strong agreement among attendees that any introduction of online voting should not impact the ability of voters to vote in person through the reduction of in person polling stations. Constituents believed the tradition of in person voting is important and should be maintained at least at its current available levels. This is particularly important for rural ridings where voters have to travel long distances to get to the nearest polling station.

However, if it did not impact the availability of in person voting station options, and if there were assurances that online voting would maintain secrecy and privacy, while being credible, reliable and verifiable, than there was agreement that online options should be explored to help provide access to the polls for young people, seniors, those with disabilities, and anyone else who would have difficulty getting to the polls.

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

Throughout the discussion, there were numerous other ideas raised by participants to help improve our voting system. Those listed below represent those that were noted most often and gained the most approval of attendees.

Participants felt that lowering the voting age to sixteen years old should be examined because it would get people involved in the process at a lower age. The point was raised that once people begin voting, they are likely to continue voting.

There was also strong agreement that any new electoral system include measures to be more inclusive of female and minority candidates. This would ensure our politics is more representative of the Canadian population.

The issue of a referendum was raised by several participants. There was some participants who felt that any change in the electoral system should require a national referendum. However, several participants felt that a referendum may not be the best method for deciding the issue. For those opposed to a referendum, they felt that greater consultation with Canadians would be an important step in establishing the legitimacy of any proposed changes.

Lastly, participants pointed out that some of the changes they wish to see in our democratic system are not necessarily linked to a change in the electoral system. Participants would like to see a more respective dialogue in the House of Commons, particularly in Question Period. Also, it was argued that Members and parties should focus more on constructive dialogue and less on partisanship.

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

In summary, the four principles that garnered the most support throughout the town hall discussion were for any new system to be more proportionate, to maintain the connection of Members of Parliament to their a geographic area, to maintain as much simplicity as possible from our current system, and that it include measures to increase the election of women and minorities as Members of Parliament.

**Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)**

**Date: October 14, 2016**



**Gudie Hutchings, M.P.  
Long Range Mountains**

**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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