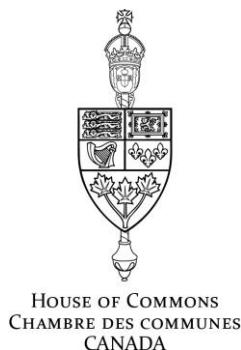


HON. ANDREW LESLIE, MP
ORLÉANS

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



DÉPUTÉ
L'HON. ANDREW LESLIE
ORLÉANS

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. 17 Aug 2016	90 minutes	Ray Friel Centre, Orléans	80-90
2.			
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 <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker x Other (please specify): We sent attendees who RSVP'd the educational materials from the Library ahead of time to better inform the discussion.			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: Yes	Replacement of the current voting system: Yes	Voter turnout: Yes	Accessibility and inclusiveness: Yes
Mandatory voting: Yes	Online voting: Yes	Local representation: Yes	Other (please specify and describe below) <input type="checkbox"/>

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)
<p>The vast majority of participants agreed that the current electoral system is outdated and produces results in Parliament that do not reflect the overall will of Canadians. Under the current rules, voters often feel as if their vote does not matter if they support a party/candidate which does not appear to have strong prospects in their local race. In sum, most felt the current system does not allow Canada's broad spectrum of voices to be heard and favours "safer candidates" which, historically, translates to white and male.</p> <p>The participants felt it is unacceptable that FPTP produces majority governments, with all the power that entails, considering their popular support is almost always below 50%.</p>

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

Those dissenting with the majority felt that the current system was adequate, but that problems do exist and need to be addressed. The main problem is due to the current reality of party discipline and whipped votes lead electors to feel that their MP represents their party or leadership more than their constituents and that parliamentary reform would restore confidence to the political system more than electoral reform would. They felt that changing the voting system will not fix this underlying problem, but could potentially exasperate it as minority governments tend to increase partisanship as an election could always around the corner. Their solution was to propose reforms aimed at increasing MP independence from their respective caucuses, leaders and parties so they are truly a local representative.

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)

MMP: Many participants favoured the MMP system as found in Germany and New Zealand. These have produced stable and representative parliaments. Those who raised concerns highlighted that there is a potential for rigidly ideological fringe parties wielding an undue amount of influence. There was also a concern that creating two-tiers of MPs, with one group more accountable to their party and not their constituents would be a negative influence to the political system.

To remedy such a situation if Canada were to adopt MMP, those candidates who were chosen to top-up their party's support should have had to run within an electoral district and enjoy some popular support. For example: if a candidate finishes second in his or her electoral district, but finished with a higher level of support relative to other members of his or her party, this person would be elected among the "top-up" candidates.

Alternative Voting (preferential ballot): Many were skeptical about this system in that it appeared to favour conventional parties and would punish parties from taking bold or provocative policy positions. Although, there was a number of correspondents in favour of the AV system. They referenced its success in Australia, but cautioned against it is burdensome and expensive model in France. One respondent made an interesting suggestion that it could be incorporated into the MMP system as the method for selecting your local MP.

STV: There were some in favour of this system, but it was not popular overall. Those who liked the system pointed out that it was both proportional in nature and maintained the link between the voters and their representatives in the respective districts. One individual cited that it would not be broadly popular due to its complexity and likely long delay in deciding winners after a vote is held.

List-PR: No one was advocating for this system and those who mentioned it saw no clear benefit.

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)

Many constituents called for more civic education in schools to better prepare our young adults to vote.

Many felt Elections Canada should have a more robust mandate to promote voting and make it more accessible across the spectrum.

There was much enthusiasm on an independent commission tasked with governing leadership debates. This would appease the impression of unfairness under the current ad-hoc system. Some people cited attack ads as a factor in the lack of participation. Some suggested Elections Canada should have some jurisdiction over political advertising content. For instance, parties should be sanctioned for misrepresentations in their advertising.

Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a

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ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

The constituents consulted were split on the opinion of mandatory ballots. Slightly more people were not in favour of Canada adopting the practice. Many felt that introducing mandatory voting does not address the variety of underlying causes that lead to a lack of participation. Most felt that increased education on how the parliamentary/electoral system works in schools would be beneficial. One idea which seemed to garner support from the town hall audience was a system that rewards voting versus punishing those who do not vote.

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)

More of those consulted were in favour of online than those who were not. The greatest concern was security and integrity of the process. The consensus was that if Elections Canada and all parties were not convinced of its security, than Canada should wait until we reach a greater ability to secure the vote.

A good suggestion was that Elections Canada could test of such a system for those with mobility issues.

Many felt that online voting would encourage more youth participating and pointed to the recent success of the census as evidence of the success of an online system.

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

Yes. The topic of a referendum was raised. Most of whom we have consulted felt such a vote is unnecessary so long as the electoral reform process is done in good-faith and enjoys broad support among political parties. Some in the room felt a referendum should be held sometime *after* the new system has been used for one or more elections. They felt that no matter how successful of a public awareness campaign would be, it would not be as effective as Canadians observing and participating in whatever new system is put in place. They felt that only once Canadians have experienced a different system should a consultative vote be held to decide whether or not we keep the new system or revert to FPTP.

A very small minority felt a referendum was absolutely necessary before changing to a new system.

Whether or not a referendum takes place, a mandatory review should be legislated after the first election under the new system to ensure there is no undue advantage for the winning party(ies) which did not present itself in the electoral reform process.

It is important that if a new system which leads to coalition governments and/or minority governments be structured to be as, “stable.” In addition to the added costs of conducting more elections, minority governments tend to lack long-term vision and “breathing room” to make tough decisions.

The amount of time and resources devoted to consulting Canadians is insufficient. For example, the NEB consultations for the Energy East Pipeline is \$10M versus the roughly \$600k for the Electoral Reform Committee.

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When considering how our country is to be represented, an audience member highlighted there must be a greater effort on bringing in diverse voices to the electoral reform debate. Such voices that are not normally heard on such things, like: Indigenous peoples, low-income citizens, marginalized ethnic communities, etc. Consulting academics and activist groups is necessary, but the government risks that this process leaving out the perspectives of a large proportion of the populace.

One concern raised if Canada were to adopt a proportionate system was that there must be safeguards against fringe parties with marginal support wielding too much influence in parliament. One proposal was that there must be a threshold of popular support – somewhere around 5 percent – that a party must receive before they can be awarded proportional seats.

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

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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