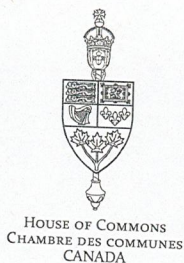


MICHAEL LEVITT, M.P.
YORK CENTRE

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



MICHAEL LEVITT, DÉPUTÉ
YORK CENTRE

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

| CONSULTATION | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Date Of Meeting | 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) |
| 13 Oct. 2016 | 6:30-8:00 p.m. | UJA Federation - Lipa Green Centre - 4600 Bathurst St, North York, ON M2R 1W6 | 56 |
| Form: <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input 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): | | | |

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Among participants in the town hall on electoral reform, no consensus existed on any of the major issues discussed: the existing electoral system, alternative voting systems, and the question of a referendum. A variety of opinions were expressed both for changes to the current system and for the status quo, as well as for a referendum.

What did participants say about the current system for electing Members of Parliament?

Of participants, a significant number supported the current First Past the Post (FPTP) system, and did not wish to see any changes to our electoral system.

The remaining participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the FPTP system. Participants felt disenfranchised by FPTP, as it provides representation only of the "largest single group" of voters, and not of all voters as a whole. The second point of opposition to FPTP was the disincentive it creates to voting sincerely in support of a candidate/party, which could potentially lead to vote splitting and a less favoured candidate winning by plurality.

Those advocating for reform expressed a wish to be able to vote their "conscience" without fearing that their ballot will split the vote and lead to the election of a party they do not wish to see in power. There was deep dissatisfaction with the FPTP system's incentive to vote "against" a particular candidate/party to avoid such a situation (and on both a local/national scale, choosing the candidate/party thought to have the best chance of defeating the party wanted removed from power).

There was the widespread feeling among those advocating reform that an election should be more than a reflection of the electorate's feelings about the government at the time (popularly referred to as "throw the bums out").

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

Which alternatives to the current system were discussed?

Of those advocating electoral reform, a large number of participants expressed support for an electoral system based on proportional representation (PR). Among this support, however, were also concerns about the implementation and consequences of any system based on PR.

In principle, many supported a proportional system, namely and for instance, that a party that receives 30% of the vote would win 30% of elected seats, but there was strong opposition to any electoral system that would result in the election of fringe or extremist parties. While thresholds could potentially limit a marginal party's ability to be elected, concerns were raised about the ability of these thresholds to be overcome. The examples drawn here were to the Israeli electoral system and its history of coalition governments formed with the support of marginal or special-interest parties. Concerns were also raised about the lack of political stability and legislative productivity by which these kinds of coalition governments can be characterised.

Among those favouring PR, a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system was favoured most widely. Participants expressed the importance of local representation and a connection between constituents and a local MP. Participants also expressed support for an open list of candidates. Concerns were raised with the lack of transparency of a closed list system.

Both within support for MMP and for any other system, participants advocating reform also supported an alternative vote system. Participants wanted their votes to count such that any candidate elected does so with a majority of votes. The plurality required by FPTP in most cases does not fulfill this.

However, a point was raised such that any electoral system should protect the ability of an Independent candidate to run and be elected for office that PR systems may not allow.

Among this discussion, a salient point was raised regarding the impact a change in electoral system could have on the representation afforded to sparsely populated regions of the country, such as the north and rural areas. The point raised the issue of ensuring a balance in reflecting a legitimate desire for voter equality, and the recognition of differing contexts across the country to ensure effective representation.

Other major topics raised by participants:

The issue of a referendum on electoral reform was divided among participants.

Many participants strongly supported a referendum as justified by the nature of the issue of electoral reform, and its importance to our democratic system, such that the legitimacy of any changes can only be granted by referendum.

Some participants conditionally agreed with the need for a referendum on the basis that a referendum must be binary and ask a clear question to be truly answered by voters.

However, many participants disagreed with the need for a referendum, citing multiple reasons. Some felt that the 2015 election results justified electoral reform on the basis that the governing party was elected with a policy platform including electoral reform, and additionally that a majority of voters supported parties advocating electoral reform. Others felt that referenda are simple tools that are a poor way to decide an issue such as electoral reform. Many raised the issue that referenda often fail due to the impact the phrasing of the question can have. This feeling was reflected in arguments that referenda are tools used to "kill" issues, and that requiring a referendum on electoral reform would simply continue the existing FPTP system.

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A majority of participants agreed that education must be integral to any attempts at electoral reform. Participants pointed to a lack of literacy of our current electoral system among many voters, such that any change could be “a recipe for disaster” without extensive and effective public education campaigns, particularly targeting marginalized and minority populations, specifically those that have historically had low voter turnout.

A minority of participants addressed the issue of mandatory voting. Among these participants, support for mandatory voting was near universal. However, there was no consensus or agreement as to the process by which this mandate should be enforced (e.g. positive or negative reinforcement via tax incentives or fines).

During a discussion on the process the work of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, a point was raised which urged that the committee reach a consensus on the principles for our electoral system such that any proposed new system should reflect these principles.

| | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE) | | Date: 14 – Oct-2016 |
| MP's signature: | Michael Levitt, M.P. (Name) | |

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

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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