

JOËL LIGHTBOUND
LOUIS-HÉBERT



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

JOËL LIGHTBOUND
LOUIS-HÉBERT

**RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE**

**TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

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. 11/10/2016	17:00-20:00	Université Laval	About 100 people
2.			
3.			
4.			
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):			
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>Some guest speakers and participants think that one of the advantages of our system is that the M.P. has more time for the riding and for the population. Many participants, as well as our guest speakers, decried the distortion caused by our current voting system in which votes cast do not translate into a proportional number of seats in Parliament. For example, the Green Party, which obtained 3.4% of the votes, obtained only 0.3% of the seats. On the other hand, in 2015, the LPC, or the PCC in 2011, with only 40% of the popular vote, obtained about 54% of parliamentary seats, and 100% of power (except for the counter-power exercised by the judiciary and the role of the opposition). Mr. Derriennic also highlighted the other disadvantage of our system, namely, the fact that it necessitates strategic voting. For this reason, the true preference of voters is never known. On the other hand, our current system encourages the formation of majority governments, which</p>

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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

ensures greater stability. This can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the participant's point of view.

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)

Two main alternatives were considered: the compensatory mixed member proportional system and the preferential system, which, in an ideal situation, should be integrated into a moderately compensatory mixed proportional system. These two options propose a redrawing of the electoral map, but several citizens seem to have some reservations as to the feasibility of the electoral map being redrawn before the next elections. Moreover, most often, the proposed systems will necessitate the formation of coalition governments, and during the consultation, some people seem to think that in our current political culture, it will be difficult to achieve this, and that a lot of educational work must have to be done beforehand. An advantage of these systems is that it can involve multiple voting (party/M.P., list of preferences, etc.) and can allow smaller political groups, like the Green party, to gain more status. In this case, voters will not have to wonder if their vote counts since the obligation to vote strategically no longer applies, especially in the preferential option, since they can name their 2nd, 3rd, etc., choice, and in the proportional option, because each vote translates into a higher chance of representation in parliament. This should dispel the impression that some people's votes do not count. Some disadvantages, like the possibly lesser consideration given to list members by their peers or by the population, were brought up. The experts also indicated that in most jurisdictions where list members cohabit with locally elected members, there is no problem in terms of a difference in the degree of consideration given to any one M.P., and where it exists, these are only exceptional cases. Some people called for an examination of the Swiss situation and its operation (decision making by popular referendums, proportionality of parliament and council of ministers, distance voting and voting through the Internet). However, experts appear more sceptical since it will be difficult to copy Switzerland, given that its political culture was established over a long period. Germany, on the other hand, was mentioned several times, for its interesting model.

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)

Several Canadians find that the current system does not encourage involvement in the democratic process because of the distortion between the voting and the result, as it translates into representation in parliament, and the pernicious imperative of voting strategically, which subverts the voting intention. In this respect, we enjoyed the testimony of a Green Party militant who gave up running for elections under the current voting system because it is too unfavourable to smaller political groups like his. Lastly, according to Florence Côté, part of the reason why fewer youths vote is because they are discouraged by both strategic voting and the distortions observed in the current system.

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

Regarding mandatory voting, only one panellist and a few participants mentioned it. Mandatory voting is mentioned in the law or the constitution, but because defaulters face no penalties, it has no impact on participation. However, some jurisdictions charge a small fine in a bid to improve

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participation.

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)

The online and postal voting procedure was mentioned, especially while discussing the Swiss example. Comments in this regard were indicated that voting had to be secure in order to ensure confidence in the results, with the stakes being highest in the case of Internet voting. In fact, there was no consensus regarding online voting, and according to some, for security reasons, it is better to maintain paper-based voting.

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

Regarding the youth vote, participation in the first vote for which one is eligible is a determining factor in future voting participation. In that respect, having polling stations in schools appears to be a good idea. It was also asserted that political parties have the responsibility of integrating more women and cultural minorities into their candidate pools in order to ensure the best representation of the general population in Parliament. Finally, to encourage women's participation in politics, the fact that the political culture must also evolve to become less repulsive to women (i.e., by fostering values such as respect, consensus, and work-family balance, etc.) was emphasized.

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

Public consultation on electoral reform

October 11, 2016

M.P. Joël Lightbound, received Minister Jean-Yves Duclos; CADEUL (Confédération des Associations d'étudiant et d'étudiantes de l'Université Laval), as well as guest speakers: Louis Massicotte, political science professor at Université Laval; Jean-Pierre Derriennic, who is also political science professor at Université Laval and author of the book, *Un meilleur système électoral pour le Canada / A Better Electoral System for Canada* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2016); in addition to Florence Côté, President of Citoyenneté Jeunesse and Forum Jeunesse of the National Capital Region. Approximately 100 people attended, and about 20 of them shared their questions and comments.

Discussions centred on two specific issues: the voting system and inclusion of youths, women and members of cultural minorities in the voting system. Although there was no consensus around a specific proposal, it was clear that the guest speakers, as well as the audience at the conference, believe the current voting system must change. Overall, participants favoured a voting system characterised by preferential and/or proportional elements, considering various conditions. Furthermore, it was clear during the consultation that the advantages of inclusion and providing incentives to political participation in the electoral system relate to, and even extend beyond, the voting system.

The guest professors, Mr. Massicotte and Mr. Derriennic, each presented alternatives to the simple first past the post system, after Mr. Massicotte presented the participants with a background to the consultations. Since the committee was obliged to consider the proportional as well as the preferential voting systems while fully taking into account the effectiveness, legitimacy and local representation, he considered the

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mandate to be well designed. The two voting systems have proven to be effective when implemented in other democracies. The issue of legitimacy arises mostly at the level of the distortion existing between the popular vote as expressed and the proportion of seats obtained. For its part, local representation can be maintained only through compromise, since it ideally requires small constituencies, while proportionality factors function better with larger constituencies, unless the number of representatives is dramatically increased, approximately by 200 M.P.s.

Mr. Massicotte thus presented the mixed proportional vote described or so-called compensatory mixed member proportional system, which, according to him, favours a fairer representation of political diversity among citizens by opening up seats to a greater number of political parties. Several commentators raised questions regarding the possible stumbling blocks of this system: redrawing of the electoral map, preponderance of coalition governments, which will be unprecedented for Canadians, and the division between representatives elected in the districts and those elected as a part of lists. The challenges with this system are therefore two-fold: logistics required for redrawing the electoral map and adapting to a new number of MPs as well as decentralization and redistribution of power between the political parties.

After the group discussed the proportional voting system, Mr. Derriennic presented his proposal for a preferential and moderate voting system, as stipulated in his book. Mr. Derriennic's first argument is that government should not necessarily choose between the proportional and the preferential system. In fact, the two are not mutually exclusive. For this reason, Mr. Derriennic proposed a moderate proportional system, in which current districts shall be grouped into regions of 3 to 5 constituencies, thus creating new and larger constituencies in which a proportional vote will be organized. Compared to the simple proportional system, this moderate proportional system will temper the increase in parties represented in parliament, thus helping to limit political instability. Moreover, this system will ensure that elected M.P.s will still represent local realities and better represent the diversity of local interests. However, without preferential voting, this voting system does not circumvent the need to vote strategically. As such, Mr. Derriennic proposes that the preferential vote be added to this system.

In this regard, the audience also had questions on the risk of the system being too complicated for the concept to be communicated to the general population and on whether the preferential system itself would not simply be a more effective method. Mr. Derriennic, in his response, observed that the simple preferential system encourages centralization and the accumulation of power in the hands of one or two federal parties. At least, with the preferential system, the wishes of the population are not hidden as they are with the need to vote strategically. Voting will thus be more honest, and the voter's experience, much like their desire to participate, will be improved. However, the preferential vote is not a panacea.

For her part, Ms. Côté delved into the obstacles faced by youths, women and minorities both at the level of voter participation and of active political involvement. She highlighted obstacles faced by youths in particular. The impression that their votes do not count, because of the voting system, among other things. They also face difficulties in voting for geographical and logistical reasons linked to their studies.

Regarding under-representation of women in politics, the most significant obstacle is the lack of opportunities and specific support to women at each stage, beginning from political party recruitment and their decision to enter their candidacy for nominations. Visible minorities face similar obstacles, and so the end result is the preponderance of traditional candidates, who are most often upper socio-economic class white males. For this reason, Ms. Côté proposed a quota system for under-represented groups and cultural minorities, either at the level of nominations or during elections, as a possible solution and guarantee of representation of these groups. She also called for the minimum voting age to be dropped to 16 years, as this will allow supervision of the first vote and encourages voting in future elections. In her closing remarks, she asserted that voters' participation in a representative democracy has much higher stakes than the voting system, although the latter might well have an influence.

Regarding mandatory voting, an audience member raised the question and the speakers were of the opinion that mandatory voting is, after all, a legitimate choice in the Canadian context. Conversely, they warned against severe fines, recalling that about seven million Canadians did not vote during the last elections, and that it will be too complicated to fine such a large number of citizens.

The possibility of online voting was briefly discussed, and Mr. Derriennic spoke of the fraud risk and the challenging requirements of protection against infiltration. Further, Mr. Derriennic responded that the lack of participation in the electoral system is due more to apathy and feelings of powerlessness than to logistics.

A participant brought up the difficulty that will arise in maintaining local representation if rural constituencies are grouped together. A proposal was brought up calling for the grouping of only urban constituencies with elements of proportionality adapted to each group.

The fact that preferential options favoured centrist parties was also underscored, given that these parties have more chances of being the second choice of militants of other parties. Mr. Derriennic asserted that this is a shortcoming present wherever we have universal suffrage, and that moderates have more decision

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power in all democracies. This said, he added that it would not be as bad as in the current system, considering that there will be less strategic voting: it would be clear that votes were obtained as a second choice, and elected representatives will take this into account in order to maintain their support among these voters.

To sum up, the guests speaker's presentations, the audience's questions and comments and the e-mails received from citizens enable us to identify the desire to change the current system and make the voting more representative. However, we do not see any consensus on the best voting system. It would nevertheless appear that there is a desire for a voting system with preferential and proportional components to be seriously examined and considered.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: 14-10-2016

MP's signature:

(Name) Jean Joël Lightbound

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

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