

LLOYD LONGFIELD M.P.
GUELPH



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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. Roundtable	1pm - 2:30pm	University of Guelph	13
2. Town Hall	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Italian Canadian Center	175
3.			
4.			
Form: <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 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 checked="" 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>A straw poll was conducted at the end of the town hall asking all those who wished to see first-past-the-post (FPTP) remain, twenty people rose in favour of FPTP. Proportional representation (PR) of some form was what the majority of participants want; however, no consensus was reached on a specific type of PR. Participants from all parties did agree that FPTP was not representative, and that 50% of the vote should be achieved in order to be legitimate election. FPTP gives no incentive for majorities to work with the opposition. However, we have also received comments that FPTP is more comprehensible than most other alternatives. There was a general consensus that the votes of Canadians were not fairly translated when it came to seat distribution in the House of Commons. One benefit of FPTP is that there is geographical representation; there was support for maintaining that as people like to elect representatives familiar with local issues. A benefit of FPTP is that it leads to majorities which are more efficient but it was recognized that there is much</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

less incentive to work with opposition parties.

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)

Alternative systems of voting were discussed including Mixed Member Proportional, Proportional Representation, and alternative vote. The majority of those in attendance wanted some form of proportional representation; no consensus was reached over what type (i.e PR, MMP, Alternative). However, it was generally accepted that governments which are elected under a form of PR were more likely to work with other parties. Scotland's MMP system was brought up as a successful model. It was also remarked that in PR one doesn't vote for a person but a party, and it was generally agreed to that communities appreciate being able to vote directly for a person. In support of alternative vote and gentleman argued that in life if we cannot get our first choice we can get our second choice. Whatever new system is chosen it was emphasized that minority participation and inclusion is crucial. A problem with PR that was discussed in both the town hall and roundtable was that Belgium operates under PR and has a 98% rate of participation, but they were left without a government for a year in 2011. Four options should be provided as alternatives to FPTP.

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)

Both students at the roundtable and the general public at the town hall agreed that participation is discouraged by the idea that their vote doesn't matter. This idea is given credence by the FPTP system which allows candidates to win with just one more vote than the 2nd place candidate. This encourages people to vote against a particular party rather than for the party of their choice otherwise known as strategic voting. There was a great deal of discussion about what causes this lack of participation in the democratic process; however, there was not much discussion about what incentives/disincentives, except for mandatory voting, that could help reverse this trend

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

Mandatory voting was discussed at both the student roundtable and the town hall. Both events came to roughly similar conclusions on the matter, which was a general dislike of the notion. It was remarked that mandatory voting was oxymoronic. Another person suggested that if we do institute this policy that the ballot include an option for "none-of-the-above". The students were skeptical of this idea particularly because they felt that people should vote out of a desire to participate as opposed to it being a requirement. It was also noted that Belgium has mandatory voting, but this did not lead to a clearer picture of the political landscape, rather it led to a lack of consensus leaving Belgium without an official government in 2011.

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)

Online voting was a subject of great discussion in both the student roundtable and town hall. It was the majority consensus at both the student roundtable and the town hall that online voting could be too easily abused. A system like Estonia's was brought up wherein all of one's personal government ID, banking information, etc. is kept on a single card. The advantage being that the government only needs to secure one system to protect all its citizens' information, and it is convenient. However this would require Canada to implement the same system. As this is unlikely, it was felt safe enough to allow small pilot projects for online voting for soldiers overseas, or for areas in the Yukon, N.W.T, and Nunavut. A comment was made that they agree with electronic voting but we need to find a way to phase it in for those who are opposed

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

There were a number of additional suggestions. Concerning referendums there was a lot of discussion about how they are easily sidetracked away from the issue they address. Brexit used as an example where the actual question got lost in the emotion of so many other issues surrounding the debate. If the government wants greater youth participation they need to have confidence that their vote matters during elections, and afterwards when MP's and government begin to craft policy.

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

The town hall and roundtables were both very useful tools to assess concerns relating to democratic reform. Both the roundtable and the town hall meetings recognized that the first-past-the-post model has been acknowledged as one that no longer best represents the democratic will of Canadians in Parliament. There are however parts of FPTP that are desirable such as simplicity and its focus on geographical representation. However, as it can permit a winner without a clear majority of the vote it was determined via straw poll at the end of the town hall that the vast majority of participants wanted some form of proportional representation.

The majority of those in attendance wanted some form of proportional representation; no consensus was reached over what type (i.e PR, MMP, Alternative). However, it was generally accepted that governments which are elected under a form of PR were more likely to work with other parties and create better legislation as a result. Scotland's MMP system was brought up as a successful model. Direct proportional representation was discussed as well, but concerns were raised, especially if coupled with mandatory voting, that we could have problems experienced by Belgium wherein they were left without a government for over a year in 2011. Consideration of issues such as this will be crucial if the new system is to be PR and have the confidence of the Canadian people. An alternative ballot was also discussed as it proved voters the security that their representative will always have support from at least 50% of their constituents.

The idea that a single ballot doesn't make a difference is pervasive, particularly among youth. A voting system that acknowledges the value of every vote, unlike our current system, would do much to dissuade people of this notion. FPTP contributes to people's cynicism about politics, encouraging strategic voting in the hopes of preventing the election of one candidate as opposed to voting for their preferred candidate. Mandatory voting is a problem as it is contradictory with the premise of democracy being choice. Secondly it would require some form of punishment such as a fine. As mentioned, Belgium's experience with mandatory voting and PR has had negative unintended consequences.

Online voting was a subject of great discussion in both the student roundtable and town hall. It was the majority consensus at both the student roundtable and the town hall that online voting could be too easily abused. It was felt safe enough to allow small pilot projects for online voting for soldiers overseas, or for areas in the Yukon, N.W.T, and Nunavut.

There were a number of additional suggestions. Concerning referendums there was a lot of discussion about how they are easily sidetracked away from the issue they address. Brexit used as an example where the actual question got lost in the emotion of so many other issues surrounding the debate. If the government wants greater youth participation they need to have confidence that their vote matters during elections, and afterwards when MP's and government begin to craft policy.


Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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(ERRE)	
	<i>CLOYD LONGFIELD</i>
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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