

ELIZABETH MAY, O.C., M.P.
SAANICH – GULF ISLANDS



HOUSE OF COMMONS
 CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
 CANADA

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SAANICH – GULF ISLANDS

**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. Sept. 6 th , 2016	7PM – 9PM (2 hours)	Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney, B.C.	253 (3 staff)
2. Sept. 7 th , 2016	7PM – 8:30PM (1.5 hours)	Community Centre, Saturna Island, B.C.	76 and livestream (3 staff, 4 volunteers)
3. Sept. 9 th , 2016	7PM – 8:30PM (1.5 hours)	Community Hall, Galiano Island, B.C.	45 (1 staff)
4. Sept. 16 th , 2016	6PM – 8:30PM (2.5 hours)	Gulf Island Secondary School, Salt Spring Island, B.C.	103 (1 staff)

Form: Use of the Library of Parliament’s visual presentation
 Presentation from the MP’s office
 Open microphone
 Question and answer session
 Guest speaker
 Other (please specify):
 ~307 responses to community newsletter (Householder) survey
 ~50 individualized constituent feedback submissions
 ~100 individualized non-constituent feedback submissions
 ~100 submissions linked to small email campaigns
 ~ Between 500 and 1000 Pro-PR submissions linked to mass email campaigns

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"/> - referendum

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:

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 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

500 words)

Participants in the town halls and the householder survey overwhelmingly reported that they do not feel their votes are fairly translated by the current system with only 12.3% of householder survey respondents expressing support for FPTP.

An analysis of input submitted directly to our office also found very strong support for some form of proportional representation with only 3% of submissions in favour of maintaining the status quo.

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)

Several alternatives to the current system were discussed across the consultation venues. Participants at the town hall meetings expressed support for forms of MMP and STV. The Absolute Representation system was also suggested by one open mic participant.

Approximately 50% of constituent submissions to our office expressed support for MMP, the remaining 50% for a variety of other forms of PR. Of non-constituents offering feedback, nearly half did not identify a particular system, 15% expressed support for MMP, 15% in support of PPR123 or similar systems, 10% in support of STV, and 10% in support of other systems (all percentages approximate).

Responses to the newsletter survey question “What is your preferred voting method?” yielded the following results:

Hybrid PR – 134 (43.6%)

MMP – 49

STV – 51

FPTP – 38 (12.3%)

Ranked ballot – 9

Mix of Hybrid, MMP, STV – 5

Not sure – 2

Across all forms of consultation participants repeatedly identified the following features as important to them in an electoral system: local representation, the meaningful representation of rural and northern communities, the financial accessibility of running for office, the rights of minorities (linguistic, racial, gender) and the engagement of youth voters.

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 participants reported that FPTP and the feeling that their “vote does not count” significantly contributed to low voter turn-out. Non-mandatory voting and a lack of a sense of community on election day were also raised as possible reasons for low engagement in the democratic process.

To address FPTP alienation, many participants felt that changing to a system of PR would encourage Canadians to participate in the democratic process. Mandatory voting and/or encouraging non-partisan groups to create a sense of civic pride by holding BBQs or similar community events on election day were also suggested. Lowering the voting age was suggested as a way to grow the youth vote. Many participants expressed a desire for a “made in Canada” system of PR that meaningfully engaged all eligible voters.

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

At the Sidney and Saturna town halls, there was moderate support for mandatory voting as a means to grow civic pride in the democratic system and to activate youth, as long as penalties for not voting were reasonable.

Our office received limited feedback in regards to mandatory voting. Of the five submissions in favor, one advocated for a penalty, one advocated for a tax incentive, and two advocated for a “None of the Above” option.

Responses to the householder survey question “Do you think we should make voting mandatory?” yielded the following results:

Yes – 124 (40%)

No- 134 (43.6%)

Not sure – 47

Blank – 2

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)

While a few participants expressed support for online voting, many others expressed deep concern over the possibility of fraud, accessibility and the loss of secrecy. Of the fewer than ten submissions to our office addressing online voting, half were for it, half were against.

Several participants in the town halls expressed a desire to preserve current voting practices, as they were concerned that online voting would lead to an erosion of civic pride and community.

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

Other major topics raised by participants at the town halls included access to the system for smaller parties, underrepresentation of women in the House, non-corporate rights and representation, the impact of the system on political parties, and the concentration of power at the top.

On the topic of a referendum, a clear majority of town hall participants did not feel a referendum was necessary to change the electoral system. Many argued that voters must experience a new system before voting on its efficacy.

We received approximately 60 submissions from constituents and non-constituents addressing the referendum question, with approximately 40 in favour, 20 against. Of the 40 in favour, approximately 80% were from email campaigns.

Constituent responses to the question “Do you agree that it can be done without a referendum?” yielded the following results:

Yes – 192 (62.5%)

No – 52

Not sure – 59

Blank – 4

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

I am a deeply fortunate Member of Parliament. Over the course of four town halls across my riding, my constituents contributed thoughtfully and meaningfully to the ongoing national dialogue on electoral reform. From small Saturna, where over 76 people - nearly a third of the island's permanent population - joined myself and Minister Monsef, to Sidney where over 250 people participated in our town hall; my constituents made their voices heard. While every voice was unique, it has become clear to me that there exists a consensus around certain points and I intend to represent those voices dutifully in Parliament and on the special committee on electoral reform.

A wide majority of the residents of Saanich-Gulf Islands want greater proportionality in our electoral system. Unique among Canadians for having elected a Green MP, my constituents know first-hand the great challenge, yet also advantage, of electing a Member of a small party as their representative to Parliament. Their vote brings voice to the diffuse, yet many voters across Canada that have long felt their ballots wasted by a system that privileges larger parties. This plain fact of our current system was elucidated time after time at every town hall: our system does not fairly translate votes into representation in Parliament and it needs to change. Nearly 97% of the submissions to our office advocated for a change to the status quo. Nearly 80% of those who responded to my householder advocated for a system with greater proportionality. And so too did these two core elements form the government's promise in the 2015 throne speech, namely to 'make sure that every vote counts' and to make 2015 the last election under First Past the Post.

There were a few topics on which my constituents were not as united, though on issues which seemed of lower priority than vote fairness. Online voting and mandatory voting were subjects that drew concern and where citizens advocated for caution. Though mandatory voting was seen as a possible solution to voter disengagement, it was not widely supported in my householder (only 40% in favour) and those who wanted it, advocated for modest penalties. We had submissions that requested a 'none of the above' option be included on the ballot as a means of empowering voters to express voter dissatisfaction through action, rather than apathy. Discussions on online voting evoked deep concern over the possibility of fraud, my riding especially sensitive to such a perversion of our system having gone through robocall scandals in previous elections. My constituents who are so keenly motivated to make every vote count, understandably view the ballot as sacrosanct. Its privacy, our sense of community, and the potential for fraud are all concerns expressed about online voting.

On the topic of a referendum, overwhelmingly the sense from my town halls was that it was unnecessary and ill-advised. Many expressed the desire to experience a new system before voting on its efficacy. My householder survey echoed this sentiment with 62.5% of respondents saying no to a referendum and a greater number saying they were unsure than said yes.

There were of course, suggestions apart from vote fairness, proportional representation, mandatory and online voting. My office received hundreds of individual submissions on a wide array of topics related to the electoral system, including on how to increase citizenship engagement, expand the franchise to include 16-18 year olds, changes to advanced polling, and a number of handcrafted electoral systems designed by Canadians for Canada. I have attached those unique submissions here. The time and effort poured into this work by so many passionate Canadians should make elected officials pause and consider how important electoral change is for so many of our fellow citizens.

My first duty as an elected member of Parliament is to the residents of Saanich-Gulf Islands. I remain ever grateful for their contribution to this important national debate.

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Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)	Date: Oct 14th, 2016
MP's signature:	Elizabeth May (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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