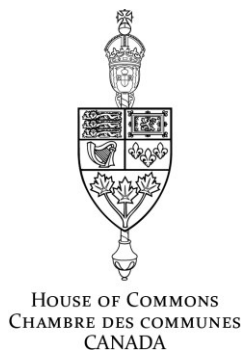


MARYAM MONSEF
PETERBOROUGH—KAWARTHA

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



MARYAM MONSEF
PETERBOROUGH—KAWARTHA

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. 6 September 2016 | 13:00-15:00 | The Mount Community Centre, Peterborough | 175 (+7 staff/volunteers) |
| 2. 6 September 2016 | 18:00-20:00 | The Mount Community Centre, Peterborough | 135 (+7 staff/volunteers) |
| 3. 11 October 2016 | 10:00-11:00 | North Kawartha Public Library, Apsley | 6 (+3 staff/volunteers) |
| 4. 11 October 2016 | 13:00-14:00 | Buckhorn Community Centre, Buckhorn | 35 (+4 staff/volunteers) |
| 5. 11 October 2016 | 15:30-14:30 | Havelock Lions Hall, Havelock | 35 (+4 staff/volunteers) |
| 6. 11 October 2016 | 18:30-20:30 | Douro Community Centre, Douro | 30 (+6 staff/volunteers) |
| 7. 13 October 2016 | 10:00-11:00 | Smith-Lakefield Community Centre, Lakefield | 80 (+4 staff/volunteers) |
| 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 type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Feedback from constituents by email, phone and letters (54), small group discussions at consultations | | | |
| SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary) | | | |
| Voting systems: FPTP, alternative vote, single transferable vote, list proportional, mixed member proportional | 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): Yes, see below |

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

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)

Constituents felt that there were a number of strengths related to the current system for electing Members of Parliament. They included, in order of the frequency that they were mentioned: simplicity, local representation, accountability to constituents, familiarity, the creation of stable majority governments, transition between governments is simple, low cost, difficult to rig elections, traditional system used by a number of countries, and the system quickly produces a clear winner. Some participants felt that the system currently used works well and they could not see how a different system would be an improvement.

A number of flaws were also identified by constituents. They included, in order of frequency that the weaknesses were mentioned: false majorities (where 100% of the power is given to the winning party in the House of Commons, even though the party may not have received more than 50% of the popular vote), citizens feel that their votes do not count if they are not voting for the winning candidate, low voter turnout, no representation for minority parties, incentivises strategic voting, have to vote for the party when voting for a candidate (would prefer these separated), favours the representation of wealthy due to cost of running, adversarial campaigns and in the House of Commons, does not encourage compromise or consensus building in HoC.

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)

A number of alternatives to the current system were discussed: alternative vote, list proportional representation, single transferable vote, and mixed member proportional. Some constituents also suggested that Canada should develop a system that is unique to this country, based on some elements of the different systems.

Participants identified a number of specific features that were important to them in an electoral system. Again, in order of frequency that these features were mentioned: local representation, proportionality of seats in the House of Commons to the popular vote, making every vote count, simplicity, increased voter turnout, ability of constituents to hold their elected representative and the government to account, legitimacy, more cooperation among members and parties in the House of Commons, more choice in candidate, preventing the influence of corporations, and maintaining the number of seats in the House of Commons.

Of those constituents who preferred a specific system, mixed member proportional was the most popular choice, followed by other methods of proportional representation and the alternative/preferential vote. It is important to note that those who preferred proportional representation did not want to see a closed list system.

Some constituents felt that they did not have enough information to make a decision, that they did not want to see change, and that regardless of the system chosen, there should be a referendum to confirm the broad support of Canadians.

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)

Participants in all sessions discussed why they believed some Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process. They suggested the reasons include that Canadians feel disenfranchised because they believe that their vote or their views don't count, that their votes are wasted if they do not vote for the winning candidate, that there is a lack of trust and confidence in politicians and

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political parties, that there is a lack of government accountability, that Canadians are too busy to vote or are disinterested in voting, that there is not enough knowledge of the system and candidates who are running, that the Fair Elections Act may have had a negative impact on the ability of Elections Canada to inform and engage voters, that there are physical barriers for voters (i.e. for those who are deaf, blind, or who experience other disabilities and exceptionalities), that the eligibility for voting may be too restrictive (i.e. for ex-patriots or those who do not have the required identification), and that voters are aware of their rights but not of their responsibilities.

There were many suggestions on how to increase engagement in the democratic process, including the teaching of civic education throughout many levels in the education system, making online voting an option, changing the voting system so that every vote would count or so that there would be a proportional system, reducing the voting age to 16, engaging youth in federal parliamentary processes, starting model parliaments in schools, highlighting the drawbacks of not engaging in the democratic process, implementing mandatory voting with incentives and/or consequences, improving the convenience and accessibility of polling stations, making voting day a statutory holiday, taking responsibility by encouraging their own family and friends to vote, reducing the partisan nature of politics and allowing MPs to vote freely more often in order to better represent their constituents, revising identification requirements, hosting community meetings prior to elections, offering more accessible polling stations including transportation to the polls, further engaging on social media, creating more voting days and advance polls, hosting more open information sessions, giving voters a financial incentive or tax credit for voting.

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

Overall, most participants across all meetings did not think that voting should be made mandatory.

Those who supported mandatory voting argued it was necessary because it could increase overall accessibility and turnout. They also felt that online voting must be an option if voting were mandatory, so that people could choose their method of voting more freely. Some participants made the point that election day should be made a statutory holiday and that there should be consequences in place if citizens do not cast a ballot. As well, the point was made that mandatory voting should include a robust education plan to ensure that voters are aware of the choices that exist.

Those who opposed mandatory voting argued that it does not create engaged voters, that it is undemocratic to force people to vote, that it could distort voting results, that it favours incumbents who might have name-recognition, that there are better ways to engage people, that it takes the empowerment out of the act of voting because voting should always be a choice, and that it is better to educate and engage people rather than force them to 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)

Participants across all town hall meetings were fairly evenly divided as to whether online voting should be introduced in addition to the voting options available in the current system.

Those who believed online voting should be offered suggested that it would increase voter turnout because it would improve accessibility to voting for people with mobility issues, those with busy lives and younger voters. They believed that online voting had the potential to reduce the cost of elections, and that because people already do so many things online (like banking and submitting their income taxes), online voting can be trusted.

Those who opposed online voting primarily raised concerns with the issues of security and privacy. They were concerned that online voting could be subject to hacking and therefore distortions of the will of the people, and that there might be no way to ensure the secrecy of the ballot. As well, it was raised that some people do not have access to a computer and the internet, so there should always be a paper ballot option.

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Regarding the maintenance of voting practices, some constituents felt that presenting themselves at the polling station was an important part of the ritual of voting, that they wanted to maintain the secrecy of the ballot, that the government should protect the maintenance of polling stations with 4 hours off to vote, that a paper ballot was the most secure, that advance polls were an important part of voting, that the government should maintain polling places as a safe and neutral spaces, and that the government should maintain ban on corporate funding.

Those who wanted to see changes in the voting practices suggested a reduction of the voting age so voters could learn and participate in high school, that election day should be a statutory holiday, that the government should better fund and empower Elections Canada to fulfill their mandate, that Elections Canada should bring back vouching practices, that there should be a blackout on results until all votes are cast, that there should be more staff at polling stations to reduce lines and wait times at polls, that Elections Canada should bring back enumerators, that Elections Canada should offer Braille and audio aides for voting, that Elections Canada should increase additional adaptations for those with disabilities and exceptionalities, that voters should be allowed to use their voter identification cards as a piece of ID, and that the government should make voting more accessible to those living out of province or in a different riding.

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

Blackout on voting results: Some constituents raised the suggestion that no voting results should be released until all votes are cast, in order to prevent the results of voting in the eastern provinces from influencing voters in the western provinces.

Referendum: The potential of the decision going to a referendum was raised at all of the sessions, and the results of straw polls showed that most constituents do not want a referendum on this issue. The main reason why constituents do not favour a referendum is the belief that one question cannot capture the complexities of a change as big and important as in the voting system.

Increased minority representation: The observed lack of women and minorities (ethnic, cultural, ideological, visible, Indigenous, range of abilities) in the House of Commons was highlighted as a major cause of disenfranchisement because those who may identify as part of these groups feel that they are not represented in political forums and are therefore inclined to disengage from the political process.

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

After consulting over 500 constituents during 7 local town hall meetings and through feedback received by email, phone, letter, and social media, it is clear that there is an appetite for thoughtful change to the electoral system.

Each town hall conversation included a presentation from the MP about the nature of the consultation being conducted by the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, as well as a presentation of the different electoral systems as illustrated by the Library of Parliament. Participants were then organized into small group discussions or a roundtable format, depending on the size of the event, and provided an opportunity to suggest feedback on each question. An open question and answer session followed each event.

While opinions on the various electoral systems did vary, most participants indicated their support for a more proportional electoral process that still respected the need for local representation and simplicity of the ballot. There was near universal agreement that a closed-list system would not be optimal.

Additionally, a significant number of participants felt that more education was needed, not only for younger voters but those of all ages, both in terms of any changes that might be suggested as well as general information about the current democratic process.

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Overall, participants were not in favour of mandatory voting, believing that the choice of voting should remain an important aspect of the electoral system. Even if the option of spoiling a ballot or choosing a 'none of the above' option on the ballot were offered, participants did not believe that mandatory voting would be preferable.

Regarding online voting, the majority of participants agreed that it could increase voter turnout, but only if it were implemented in addition to the current options for paper ballots and only if there were assurances from independent sources that the system for voting would be secure. Even still, some participants expressed concerns that online voting might be vulnerable to hacking, no matter what the security protocols.

A number of other proposals to increase participation in the electoral system were suggested, such as incentives for voting, making election day a statutory holiday, and decreasing the voting age.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 14, 2016

MP's signature:



Maryam Monsef

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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