

KYLE PETERSON
NEWMARKET-AURORA

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

KYLE PETERSON
NEWMARKET-AURORA

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. Sept. 15/2016	7:00pm - 9:00pm	Council Chambers, Aurora Town Hall, 100 John West Way	65 attendees 2 Constituency Staff
Form <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office (adapted from Library of Parliament presentation) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Breakout discussion groups			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Replacement of the current voting system: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Voter turnout: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Accessibility and inclusiveness: YES
Mandatory voting: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Online voting: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Local representation: <input type="checkbox"/> YES	Other (please specify and describe below) <input type="checkbox"/> YES Voting Age <input type="checkbox"/>
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)			
<p>Participants expressed their support in that the current system produced a direct, identifiable individual with a direct link to a specified geographic riding to which they are held accountable. This allows residents to easily understand who represents them, or who is supposed to represent them and their concerns to the government. While there were concerns that the person who win may not win with a majority of votes in their geographic riding, at least they can simply understand that it is the person who gets the most votes who wins. In this sense, they found that their votes are accurately being translated if they are voting on a local/riding level, but not when considering the national level. This was a common source of frustration, because under the current system, voters are faced with either basing their vote on national sentiments and on the national campaign or the local campaign and local candidates, but are faced with a direct trade-off between the two.</p>			

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

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

ERRE@parl.gc.ca

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)

Participants discussed STV, MMP, List PR, Open PR, and Ranked ballots. The simplicity of the voting method was paramount for a participants involved in the discussion – they wanted to stress that whatever system is chosen, it needs to be able to explained in simple, straightforward terms to allow people of all languages and abilities to understand how it works, because if they don't understand they will not want to participate. Having a local representative to go to was extremely important, particularly in terms of having an identifiable MP and constituency office that residents can go to so that they can get assistance with government programs, or at least lodge complaints about any given issue. One thing participants voiced their concern about was the increase in tactical voting should a shift to a proportional system be undertaken – they want to ensure that the goal of an individual's vote will be to see the individual they vote for be elected, not to vote for someone with the aim of preventing another individual being elected. There was no consensus or majority opinion on which voting system should be adopted, but the principle of fairness and a system that is representative should be the way forward. There was also confusion regarding List PR - it wasn't clear how that system would actually work.

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)

Some participants suggested that it is a question of individual ability – that some may not have the means or capacity to get to a polling station, and that while they may wish to participate, they face barriers to do so. Also in this vein lies increased education, beyond civics courses, perhaps done by Elections Canada to help those of lesser abilities to understand the importance of elections, and the systems of voting.

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

The sentiment of the room on the topic of mandatory ballot was mixed. There were concerns about how feasible the enforcement of 'punishments' for not voting would be, as well as that it may increase voter apathy or have voters participating in the process without being adequately informed. Some argued that in one's right to vote there lives a parallel right to not vote, and to make such a decision is a conscious choice demonstrating that the individual is informed and aware of their actions, and such ability should not be taken away.

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 discussed online voting, and were in favor of it provided that it would increase turnout, but there were many concerns with regards to voter integrity being maintained, access and use of the technology for those less 'tech-savvy', as well as security of ballots and concerns around hacking. Almost all attendees entertained the idea of online voting, but expressed similar concerns. There were also concerns with regards to households having their votes dictated if it was online, and the family can sit around the computer to vote together by each logging into their ballot one after another. Some individuals hoped that although online voting may be adopted, there would still be the option to vote via paper ballot or to attend a polling station and cast your ballot electronically at a designated voting location.

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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)

A major theme that participants came together was the need to improve student engagement and one way in which this should be done is to lower the voting age to 16, as well as to enhance and improve Civics education in secondary schools. A common phrase was 'If they are old enough to learn and be licensed to drive, and be trusted on the roads, then they should be trusted to vote'. There was also opposition to lowering the voting age.

Participants also shared opposing views on the need for referendums to determine the legitimacy of a voting system. A few acknowledged that previous changes to franchisement, such as giving women the right to vote, was done without a referendum but done by Parliament because it was the right thing to do. Others commented that although the current government has a majority mandate, they cannot legitimately change the voting system based on that mandate alone considering the argument in favor of reform is that the current system is unfair – therefore, you cannot use results of an unfair system to claim that you have a mandate for changing the system.

Another topic discussed was the redrawing of electoral districts – that they needed to be redrawn openly, and transparently, in a way that makes sense to the average person in a hope to mitigate a party manipulating the process to their advantage, or the notion of 'gerrymandering' in the United States.

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

The common theme guiding the discussion around our electoral reform town hall was the need to ensure voter equality, diversity in Parliament – both in terms of political diversity, regional diversity, and ethnic diversity – as well as collaboration. Parliament should be an institution that encourages parties working together, and if there is a way for the electoral system to promote this then it should be strongly considered. Improving access and engagement among marginalized groups, whether they be minorities or those with various abilities is something that will increase the efficiency of the electoral system, regardless of what form that system may be. In this sense, participants were eager to note that there needs to be a separation of issues of 'structure and agency' in this process – that is to say that, issues regarding the system and form of the electoral system should be addressed in one Bill, while issues regarding agency and extending franchisement or improving the ability of marginalized groups to participate and influence the democratic process should be addressed in a separate Bill to ensure that both issues are being given adequate and appropriate consideration without having one influence the other.

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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform
(ERRE)

Date: October 14th 2016



Kyle Peterson, Member of Parliament for
Newmarket-Aurora

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 our needs. The report will be published on the committee's web site.

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