

MP CARLA QUALTROUGH
DELTA, BC

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



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

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

CONSULTATION			
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.Oct. 12/16	6:30-8:30 pm	Odd Fellows Hall, 5425 Ladner Trunk Rd., Delta, BC	40 + 4 staff
2.			
3.			
4.			
<p>Form: <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation from facilitator (power point) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Electoral reform power point, small group discussions on Topic Questions and reporting out. Groups comments were recorded on topic sheets and comments transcribed on this report. A few participants and constituents who could not attend sent us comments via email beforehand.</p>			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: X	Replacement of the current voting system: X	Voter turnout: X	Accessibility and inclusiveness: X
Mandatory voting: X	Online voting: X	Local representation: X	Other (please specify and describe below). MPs voting for constituents rather than for Party. Maintain the current system but improve it. Strengthen Elections Canada. Limit spending, donations and length of campaign. Earlier education about the electoral process in schools. Referendum, pros and cons.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS			

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

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)

Benefits: First Past the Post is stable, simple, understandable. Tried and tested for 150 years. Normally produces a majority government, therefore, stability. Potentially less open to manipulation. It is a fundamentally democratic system. Backed by a strong, clear Constitution and Charter of Rights; based in law. Accessible and inclusive. Good access to MP. Local riding association members choose candidate. Voting is not mandatory.

Flaws/Challenges: FPTP does not produce a Parliament with representatives (MPs) proportional to the % of votes earned. Majority governments often get elected by minority of voters. Minority parties are unrepresented and therefore people that voted for them feel unrepresented and are discouraged, and not “fairly translated”. MPs power to help constituents is limited if not a member of the party in power. Does not reflect diversity of voters, demographically or politically. People vote strategically, not how they really feel. It is not a mandatory system. Voting age should be lowered. Voting should be technologically advanced.

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)

Proportional Representation, with reference to the Fair Vote submission to the all-party committee on ER: www.fairvote.ca/fvc-submission-to-erre/
Democracy works best when every vote counts and the only way to ensure this is by having Proportional Representation. The whole of Canada should be represented, not just the will of the governing party.

An educated population is not satisfied with the current, “winner take all” system.

Single Transferable Vote. One group thought this led to a more representative Parliament than we have now and was still simple to understand. This system limits the power of parties and will lead to greater cooperation in Parliament and better legislation.

Mixed Member Ridings came up in one group. They felt that this feature allowed for better representation for more people in the riding. People with diverse needs will vote for one of the members.

Citizens Assemblies came up in several groups as a positive way to study change and make recommendations on issues as big as making changes to the electoral system. This took place in BC in the early 2000s. The impartiality of the CA was lauded (although their recommendations failed to gain support in two referendums).

Local representation was a common thread in all the discussions. Necessary to have the candidate be chosen locally and live in the riding.

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)

This was not a major topic of discussion but the following comments were noted:
Parliament is too adversarial. It needs to be more collegial. The “attack-ads” used during campaigning put people off. “We live in polarizing times”.

Under the current system the results do not necessarily reflect the will of the voters. Many people commented that MPs tow the party-line instead of doing what the constituents ask.

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Ways to encourage participation were discussed: Introduce education about our democracy and the electoral process earlier. Currently students in public school learn about it in Gr. 11; this is much too late. Lower the voting age. Educate “the public” by knocking on doors between elections to find out what their issues are. Have more constituency offices. Engage people on social media on issues. MP needs to be in the riding and connecting with people; set a minimum number of days required to be in the riding. More town halls and discussion groups (like this one). Modernize the voting, i.e., electronic voting. MP should be engaging with all levels of government. Ensure “minority parties”, i.e. Green, are represented.

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

This was discussed. While a few felt it would be helpful others did not as it would run contrary to the Canadian values of “...freedom of choice and respect for human rights among our culturally and religiously diverse citizens.”

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)

Yes. The younger participants indicated that online voting would encourage young people to vote.

Another participant said (written submission) “Electronic voting works and is a powerful tool to inform and engage with electors. I have seen this first hand through administrating dozens of online elections in Canada and in the US. My experience includes extensive work with indigenous communities and their leadership that are integrating voting technology to reach a larger percentage of their members to inform, engage, and consult with them as well as facilitate their choice to consent (or not) in major decisions including customized laws relating to land use, membership codes, and leadership selection or custom election codes.”

Some people did express the view that the current system should be retained because it is trusted and well understood and “...the government has far more serious issues to be dealing with than this...”

Other people said keep the current system but modernize it by introducing electronic voting and spending more time and energy engaging voters between elections.

The fact that the vote was “secret” was highly appreciated by all.

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

With respect to a referendum a few people advocated for it. Most were against. One group suggested that a referendum be held after a new system was introduced in an election, i.e., one election with new system and then the referendum on whether or not to stay with new system or return to the former.

Another suggestion was have a free vote in Parliament on electoral reform.

Party and election financing came up in several groups: no to off-shore, union, big business,

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special-interest groups being allowed to donate.

One group wanted to reinstate government contributions dollars linked to vote in previous election.

The need for greater voter education came up time and time again.

MPs MUST be chosen by the riding association, not parachuted in by party. This was common remark.

New system must encourage greater collaboration between parties.

Elections Canada must be made stronger so it can go after and prosecute people and parties that break the rules.

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

- Proportional Representation is an improvement on the current system and the Canadian public is ready for it.
- New system must be easy to explain/understand.
- Every vote should count.
- MPs must be selected locally, not by party.
- Local, hands-on representation by MP is highly valued.
- MPs voting for constituents rather than along party lines is very important.
- More free voting.
- Voters with diverse needs need to be represented.
- Earlier education about the electoral process in schools, and constant education and engagement with the public on issues is needed to decrease apathy and increase voter turnout.
- Despite challenges with current system, Canada's voting system is stable and has a high degree of integrity and legitimacy.
- Limit spending, donations and length of campaign.
- Strengthen Fair Elections Act and "teeth" of Elections Canada.
- Electoral reform is complex. There is a lot to learn.
- Many participants commented that our consultation was very useful and they would like to keep the conversation going.
- Most seemed genuinely pleased that they could participate in such a discussion with their MP.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 14, 2016

MP's signature:



(Name) Carla Qualtrough

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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Qualtrough, Carla - Riding 1A

From: Qualtrough, Carla - Riding 1A
Sent: October-14-16 12:01 PM
To: Qualtrough, Carla - Riding 1A
Subject: FW: Guiding Principles for Canadian Electrical Reform

From: Qualtrough, Carla - Assistant 1
Sent: October-14-16 7:03 AM
To: Qualtrough, Carla - Riding 1A
Subject: FW: Guiding Principles for Canadian Electrical Reform

Acknowledged.

From: William Sharkey [<mailto:mwsharkey@icloud.com>]
Sent: October 14, 2016 1:07 AM
To: Qualtrough, Carla - M.P.
Subject: Guiding Principles for Canadian Electrical Reform

Carla

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to consider the consider what voting process I believe best supports my MP and the Canadian Government to represent me both in Parliament and in leading our Country. I participated in two panel groups and in both cases the majority of the participants want to retain the existing process of voting, "First Past the Post". At the end of our discussions we had a vote and in the first panel, 3 of the 5 participants preferred the First Past the Post process while after the final panel, 4 of the 5 participants voted for the "First past the Post" process. Interestingly in both sessions, the moderator of our panel group preferred an alternative voting process, pointing out the anticipated benefits outlined in the handouts.

I am sending you this email, prior to the October 14, 2016 deadline because I am concerned that the verbal presentations did not fully reflect the strength of opinion of the panel against changing the voting process. In both panels we firmly voted for no change. I will base my comments on the proposed "five guiding principles" although there was some concern with them

We considered it is essential to preserve the **accountability of local representation**. The candidate elected as MP knows what commitments were made to the electorate and must be responsible for advancing those commitments to the government. This means the candidate elected must have their primary accountability to those who elected them as MP. To achieve this, they must be the individual selected by the members of the constituency and hopefully reside in the riding. Candidates parachuted into a riding by the Party or party leader has a mixed accountability to those who selected the candidate and those who voted for them. This is unacceptable. In the alternative systems where an MP wins the seat by a combination of the "first count" votes and the second count votes, they have mixed accountabilities to both parties. **We were concerned the "blended" majority would result in candidates feeling a primary accountability to their political party as their local representation would often have mixed objectives.**

We also considered it essential that the **"link between voter intention and electoral result"** or **"effectiveness and legitimacy of voting"** be clearly understood by both the voters and the elected MP. In the

“First Past the Post” system, the elected MP knows exactly what commitments were made to the individuals who elected them. In the system where the final vote count is a blend between individuals who initially voted for the elected MP, plus some who selected the individual as a second choice then the MP will not have a clear mandate from all the voters. **There will be issues the elected MP must make a decision where it is known that the objectives of the individuals on the first and those on the second votes are in conflict! Again, we are concerned that where a conflict exists, in spite of winning the election on the second ballot, the decisions and votes will only represent the political party that nominated them.**

We believe the “**integrity**” of the voting process that needs to be safeguarded is the sole commitment of the elected MP to represent the intent and best interests of the individuals who elected them. When the MP is elected on the second vote, and the different political parties had different positions, **we are concerned that the MP would both prioritize their efforts and vote to support the political party that nominated them rather than represent the individuals who voted for them.** Particularly on votes of confidence or critical issues, even if almost half of an MP’s votes were from the second ballot, it is difficult to see them represent a party other than the party who nominated them. **This could result in the parliamentary votes not representing those who supported a candidate on the second vote.**

I believe that the “**greater engagement and participation**” in the democratic process is more a matter of Parliamentary Protocol than it is voting process. If the MPs are interested in engagement and participation, they can provide an opportunity for those with minority positions to be heard in parliament by providing them a time to speak, respecting their positions while speaking, and attending the sessions.

The second vote system introduces a complexity that results in an undue conflict in voters minds related to the “**accessibility and inclusiveness**” of individual MPs, particularly where they were elected as a result of the second vote. There will be a degree of uncertainty on how well our local representative will process issues that are in conflict with the objectives of the Liberal party. Possibly this meeting is a good example. It was implied in the introductory remarks that the voting process had not been decided prior to our meeting, so you must have some concerns related to the need for the meeting to meet due diligence commitments of the government relative to a real concern to measure public opinion. I was surprised to see the few chairs at the meeting which implied you did not expect much of a turn out. I have attended meetings on the Southlands and BC Hydro Transmission lines in Tsawwassen when the participation of that community along resulted in meetings exceeding 200 participants. In these sessions, there was an implied inclusiveness that the results of the meeting would be a material factor in the the political decisions.

Our group also discussed other principles that were considered essential. Voting systems similar to some being considered have resulted in additional small parties with particular agenda or issues. Our group liked the “First to the Post” voting system because it seems to discourage the formation of many splinter groups and increases the opportunity of a majority government that can meet their objectives. Again the parliamentary process can facilitate different positions by having more free votes, where “not created here” is not an issue. Possibly some votes could be secret ballots enabling MPs to vote what they personally believe rather than simply supporting their political party.

While it is essential that minority positions be heard and considered in parliament, MPS should be able to “de-politicize” the positions and take a position on what is best for Canada. While some issues are critical they must be considered in balance with the agenda of the government. While minority positions are valid, they should not control the agenda.

In conclusion Carla, considering the interest in this meeting, the low intensity of the concern for a need for change, and extent of preparation of the participants, I believe need for political reform is more a desire of the political parties than a need of voters or parliament. I am concerned it is a decisive issue for Canadian residents. Voters believe their MPs should be creating opportunities in Canada for investment an job

creation, securing our rights to natural resources in the Canadian North, developing opportunities to develop exportable products and services, giving our youth and First Nations people a vision with hope for the future, facilitating opportunities for investment where Canada has a natural competitive advantage with the USA and Asia, developing a strategy for Canada and Canadians to cope with the uncertainty of Global Climate Change without making us uncompetitive or destroying our culture and economy.

Bill Sharkey