

DON RUSNAK
THUNDER BAY-RAINY RIVER

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
 CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
 CANADA

DON RUSNAK
THUNDER BAY-RAINY RIVER

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 1, 2016	2-3pm	Fort Frances, ON	22
2. Sept 2, 2016	1-2pm	Thunder Bay, ON	19
Form: <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office <input type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):			
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) <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)			
Most participants believe that the current system is quite flawed and does not adequately ensure proportional representation.			
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)			
Most alternatives were discussed(MPP;STV;P;online &more)Almost all agree that the new system should be simple not too complex, that it should not be online, that local representation is important to them and that proportionality is paramount.			
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)			
Lack of education. Feelings of helplessness-as though their vote doesn't count. Disengagement from government & political process. Education (non-partisan)is key.			
Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)			

Only 1 person thought voting should be mandatory. The rest feared mandatory voting would cause a large increase in spoiled ballots and was unconstitutional in terms of violating indigenous peoples rights/practices.

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. Most are against online voting because they believe it interferes with vote secrecy.

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

At least 2/3 of the participants stressed the need for a referendum. The discussion of the current low voter turnout was mentioned several times and it was agreed that more education & inclusion/investment from the public is necessary. Engaging & communicating with indigenous peoples to hear & respect their wishes was stressed.

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

Fort Frances Town Hall September 1st, 2016

Common thread voiced today is the necessity for a National referendum to present Canadians the opportunity to democratically choose how they want/don't want to change the way they vote.

Comments on holding a National referendum

- Concerned that we're discussing options before we know that Canadians want change- the public need to have a say in the decision before anything is implemented.
- Fears this town hall process is the public's final say in the electoral change- wants the process to involve much more input from Canadians.
- Feels this discussion process is flawed because very few people can access these preliminary town halls-feels the conversation is disingenuous, lip service.
- Having the referendum ask not "are you in favour or not of electoral reform" but "what do you want to see" (give several options for the public to choose from)
- Current system is unfair and could benefit from change but getting people out to vote for even a referendum is easier said than done

Comments on voting methods

- In favour of mandatory ballot voting-we should make it inconvenient not to vote
- Elections should take place over 2 days- one being a Sunday for greater accessibility
- Make voting days statutory holidays for better turnout
- Mandatory voting should be off the table unless there are specific, thorough public consultations and approval by communities (indigenous) that refrain from voting
- In jurisdictions that employ compulsory voting there's always a spike in spoiled ballots. If we force people who don't care about politics to vote, they are just going to throw away their vote in an unformed irresponsible manner and taint the electoral process
- Don't want a confusing ballot when voting- simple is best.
- Very much against online voting- less anonymity, less means to vote privately, more ways for the system to be corrupted and votes to be influenced by others

Comments regarding pre-reform implementation

- If you are fundamentally changing the way Canadians vote we must change the constitution and this absolutely needs the input of indigenous people
- Feels the presenters are taking the view that the people are educated/ understand our current electoral process as well as the proposed options, but very few people do
- Have explanations of the various options available to the public- access at MPs office, online
- People are capable of making complicated decisions about complicated matters- we too often dismiss the populous as stupid; let's give the average Canadian more respect
- Question Canadians should be asking themselves is -what do we want our electoral

systems to do in the next century? We must think long term and be open to envisioning the best method

- Need more inclusion from first nations to ensure representation and promote reconciliation
- Most agree that widespread education (for a good length of time) for all Canadians must happen first so they're informed of the possibilities and clear on the effects
- We should take time to do this right- shouldn't happen in the next few years, maybe more
- Information provided to Canadians in terms of electoral options should include what countries are doing what and how successful they are, how long have they been in place ect.
- The senate should be elected by the people using proportional representation

Comments on the various reform options

- The will of the people has already been expressed through the election - change should happen
- With list proportional representation- who makes the decision on who would get in/be the representative? No one likes the idea of just a party leader or the riding association having that selection power, nor do they want a random person representing their riding
- With single transferable voting- if more MPs were elected to balance the representations of regions, regions with low populations will lose out and large populated regions would cause problems. With the extra count-how are the "excess candidates" selected?
- Would like to see a rank ballot system
- Mixed member plurality is great-having a vote for your riding and your party is ideal
- Party lists under proportional representation isn't fair- party hacks might get in, people that cause waves and who might actually make the change that the public want will not.
- Our current first past the post method favours large powerful parties- preferential voting opens up the possibility for more party divisions and therefore more options - do we want a dozen small parties? Maybe yes maybe no.

Thunder Bay Town Hall September 2nd , 2016

Comments on holding a National referendum

- How can the government make electoral changes without first holding a referendum and how do you hold a referendum on this complex issue in terms of just a yes or no answer?
- Have the referendum ask "do you want it" and "what do you want= this, this, this or this"
- National referendums don't get a voter turnout and often don't accurately represent the will of the entire people

Comments on voting methods

- Compulsory voting is not fair, online isn't desirable
- Online voting opens up the danger of votes being influenced by others in proximity to oneself
- There are ways to employ online voting that have paper trails-ie using a receipting mechanism so voters get an anonymous receipt that they can check to ensure their vote was counted
- An overly complex voting system will not work
- What voters do during election day isn't wrong under first past the post, it's the disproportionate majority in the house that's wrong and needs to be fixed

Comments regarding pre-reform implementation

- Let's not do something for the sake of doing something- take the time we need to get it done right whether it takes 3 years or ten years
- Its heartening that current government is being more proportional in terms of this electoral reform research committee, but moving forward we must have a government that is mandated to be proportional and collaborative in all of its functioning
- Education of the public is key
- Let's start proportional democratic representation in the senate!
- We need an independent group that can engage more voters and provide national education
- There is an alienation of people from their government- voter counts are currently low; until the issue of public engagement in the political process is addressed and Canadians are better informed and more engaged, the reforms should not take place
- Doesn't see a demand for messing with the current electoral system, and doesn't see the

mandate. Having to knock on peoples doors and explain the issues and options indicates that maybe there isn't a problem with the current electoral system. The general public doesn't care

Comments on the various reform options

- Most people here are in favour of proportional representation
- If electoral reform happens, no white, straight male will ever get into Parliament
- The “key components” listed in the electoral reform options are not key- is democracy going to happen or not? Will proportional representation occur because proportional representation is democratic, and any form of it will be better than what we have now. Only other countries have our current past the post system- most others have proportional representation. Seems that Liberals do not want proportional representation, they want ranking systems because they would have a false majority
- Ranking systems will likely lead to more spoiled ballots
- Don't like the party list idea- doesn't want someone representing his riding without knowing them or the representative knowing the area and its issues
- An alternative system called proportional legislative change would not alter first past the post nor the winning candidate going to the house, it would simply alter the way the MPs vote in the house, making their vote representative of the percentage proportion to which they won the election and have the MPs sits on a small proportional committee that represents the riding.
- Wants mixed member proportional- a vote for who leads the riding and a vote for the party that leads the country
- Must give credit to the local MP because they are the elected voice of the people
- Remove party's and have MPs work for their Constituents again- MPS working on behalf of the people who elected them, not coercing voters to tow party lines
- Apathy and disengagement will be reduced when proportional votes happen- it took anger and opposition to finally make change, but that won't last. Canadians have no solid rules/mandate to keep the foot to the fire- some kind of mandatory engagement should exist
- Party's these days are full of whips; not having proportional representation is undemocratic
- The electoral system needs to somehow mandate party's to be open because although this government seems more open now, things tend to swing so let's determine a means to get government to remain open regardless of who is in power

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: September 12, 2016

MP's signature:

DON RUSNAK