

HON. JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
VANCOUVER GRANVILLE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
 CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
 CANADA

HON. JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD
DÉPUTÉE
VANCOUVER GRANVILLE

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. August 15, 2016	18:30-20:30	Community Dialogue Vancouver, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 participants • 10 volunteers and staff 2 facilitators :The Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould and Charles Holmes
2. September 29, 2016	19:00-20:30	Panel Presentation Vancouver, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65 attendees • 12 volunteers and staff • 1 moderator • 5 panelists
Form: X Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation X Presentation from the MP's office <input type="checkbox"/> Open microphone X Question and answer session X Guest speaker X Other: Facilitated small group discussion and sharing			
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) X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate reform • Crossing the floor

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>There was general consensus that while no system is perfect, we also do not have a system which is working well in our current environment. One of the panelists (September 29) commented that because Canada is currently in a stable democratic condition it is the best time to adjust the electoral system. This was partially attributed to increased communication and access to information since the introduction of the First Past the Post system. Modernization of communication networks and transportation has reduced the need for specific regional representation.</p>

There were a number of strengths and challenges discussed:

Strengths:

- Simplicity (the system and related outcomes are easy to understand)
- Easy to identify your party and/or representative in your area
- Familiarity and stability
- A clarity of responsibility in roles
- Representation is seen as regional
- Effectiveness (especially in majority government – things ‘get done’)
- Tendency for strong, stable majority governments
- Easy to administer from an electoral perspective.
- Extremist, fringe parties tend not to flourish in the current system

Challenges:

- Wasted votes
- Sense that votes didn’t count - contributing to voter apathy and promoting strategic voting
- Does not promote compromise and cooperation (fosters adversarial governments and two party systems), and was
- Not representative - majority of seats are not representative of the voters’ wishes
- Regional distortion and disparity (related to safe seats and typical voting patterns) that contribute to under representation of women and minority groups in certain geographical areas
- Party hegemony through whipped votes and other party structures
- Smaller parties were penalized by the First Past the Post system
- Unbalanced executive power
- Relative weakness of parliamentary committees (in a majority government)

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 features were discussed which were of importance to constituents and panelists:

- Representation which is reflective of votes cast
 - Address changes in geographic representation – ensure everyone feels adequately represented
 - Proportional representation – number of seats in parliament should be reflective of the number of votes cast for the party
 - Transferable votes; use of preferential voting or ranked ballots (rather than winner-take-all)
 - Opportunities to vote for the candidate of choice (rather than strategically)
- Systems which encourage more cooperation, collaboration, and consensus building
 - Preventing minority governments to promote stability
 - Prevent abuse of majority governments
 - Encourage civility in politics
- Increased diversity in Parliament
 - Reflective of diversity of the country (gender, ethnicity, religion, cultural heritage)
 - Parties and minority interests
 - Encourages diversity of opinion and minority concerns
- Less party control over elected MPs
 - Increase MP accountability and autonomy
 - Reduce use of whipped votes or other party tactics to ensure party compliance
 - Opportunities to vote across party lines on issues of importance to the constituency
 - Reduced partisanship in committees to allow dialogue and debate
 - Reduction in leader power within a party – more agency for elected officials

Please return to:

Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
 131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

- Increased voter education and citizen engagement
 - Potential inclusion of mandatory voting
 - Lowered voting age, with engagement in secondary education
 - Increased engagement of youth
- Greater agency for participants (voters and elected officials)
 - Bar is quite high to become elected due to cost, ability to take time off work
- Easy to understand, user friendly, and easy to explain
 - Potential to face backlash and scare people away if too complicated
- May be better to simplify to ensure accessibility
- Consideration of Senate reform/elections in the system
- Mechanisms which discourage interests of fringe parties
- Balance of local, regional, and national interests
- Greater control of election spending
 - Strict spending limits
 - Redistribution of funds to candidates to level the playing field (especially for smaller parties with less robust fundraising mechanisms)
 - Reduction in third party spending and imposition of spending limits
 - Remove need for fundraising and impact of wealth on candidacy
- Ensure system is fluid and open to change if needing to be updated/upgraded; not set in stone

There was also discussion about specific voting systems which would meet some (or many) features outlined above:

- Mixed Member Proportional
 - Accessible; easy to explain, transparent, inclusive of minority groups
 - Proportional (vs. winner take all) is important consideration
 - May encourage collaboration instead of incentivising dissent and polarization between parties
- Single Transferable Vote
 - Puts voters before the parties – increase voter agency and reduce apathy
 - Concerns addressed re accessibility of the concept: difficult to explain/provide education about the system

Participants acknowledged that a single system may be more or less beneficial to specific groups. For example, a party which tends to be more centrist is likely to benefit from a ranked voting system with the current party structures, as it is highly likely that party will be the second choice of the majority of voters. There was a suggestion that ranked ballots may work best in less densely populated areas, where STV might be more appropriate in urban areas which are more densely populated.

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)

There was significant discussion about engaging Canadians in the democratic process through a variety of means, including changes to the electoral system.

- Ease of voting
 - Increase opportunities for advanced polls
 - Voting for students at university sites
 - Change voting day to a weekend to maximize potential attendance
 - Allow voting at any poll through the use of electronic voting lists

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- Making every vote count
 - MPs must be responsible to their constituents
 - Proportional voting system so constituents do not believe their vote was wasted
 - Voter education
 - Understanding Canada's representative democracy
 - Education re: the role of the MP – still your representative even if you did not vote for them
 - Understanding the party system
 - Increased level of citizen education (free post-secondary as an option) would lead to higher citizen engagement
 - Understanding civic responsibilities – opportunities for children (and adults) to engage with their local and regional governments
 - MP outreach to school age children, adults, older adults
 - Incentivise voting by crafting meaningful policies and policy directions for all relevant groups
 - Youth, adults, seniors
 - Minority groups and special interests
 - Increased services = increased participation
- Generate areas of interest which are important to all groups

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

During this discussion it was stressed that mandatory voting would need to be accompanied by non-partisan voter education about voting processes, including accessible, easy to understand resources about the options available to voters in an election.

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)

There was discussion of an increase in voter engagement if electronic or online voting was used. There was also discussion of the use of electronic voting lists to allow individuals to vote at any polling station regardless of where they happened to be on election day. The panelists (September 29) generally agreed that online voting was risky with the potential threat of hacking whereas the act of physically going to vote was an important part of the democratic process when citizens actually see their members of their community and can feel they are participating in valuable shared experience.

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

Referendum

- If a referendum is held, it is critical the voting system introduced be simple and easy for all citizens to understand in order to promote engagement with the process
- If no referendum, a well-balanced select group of individuals who have had the opportunity to educate themselves may allow for discussion of a more complex electoral system

Floor crossing

- Concerns that floor crossing by MPs is a violation of voter trust, and feels as though votes are 'stolen' as the party the representative switches to may not be reflective of the voters ideals and values
- There is no way of redress when a representative crosses the floor
- Consider placing a monetary value on this: aggrieved constituents whose representatives

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have crossed the floor could take the opposing party to court

Engaging the Senate

- Could pull inspiration from other countries with similar bicameral systems
- The Senate provides checks and balances – it is possible the Senate could be seen to represent the national interest, while a number of smaller parties in a regional system could represent local interest

Money in politics and fundraising

- Having some form of public funding system for political parties
- Political parties receiving funding based on number of votes

Gender balance and minority representation at the federal level

- Encourage greater percentage of candidates in each political party to improve gender balance and minority percentages

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

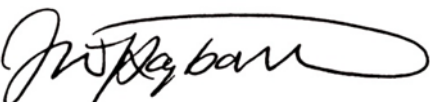
Following a lively and respectful discussion, it became clear that all topics discussed were interconnected. The key reflections and recommendations stemming from this discussion were:

- **Involvement in government:** Constituents want to be and feel like they are involved with their government, and want their voices to be heard. This needs to be reflected in our electoral processes, which must ensure that everyone can easily access voting. Increased MP outreach and engagement with citizens will help to ensure constituents feel heard and respected.
- **Voter engagement:** There must be a focus on education for voters and young people, which is fostered through the educational system and through civic dialogue. Some mentioned making Election Day a civic holiday in order to promote voting. Although mandatory voting is an option, through consensus on methods of sanction for non-voters, this would come with civic responsibility for citizens to become informed. Mechanisms must exist for this to occur which are accessible to all citizens.
- **Proportionality:** There is general interest in some degree of proportionality that ensures there is improved representation at a geographical and ideological level.
- **Diversity:** The electoral process should foster diversity, both in the election and in the House of Commons. There should be diversity in terms of the seats that are held and representation on committees.
- **Partisanship:** There is a need (and great desire) to move beyond party lines. This would be reflected in more free votes in the House of Commons, particularly on substantive issues. Reduced partisanship would contribute to a culture of increased collaboration and consensus building.
- **Specific models:** MMP and STV were discussed as preferred models, but no consensus was reached on which is a better system. It was acknowledged there is no perfect system.
- **Expert opinion:** To help guide this national decision constituents are interested in hearing from experts in electoral systems and reform in order to become better informed and educated on the options.
- **Written submissions:** We received some emails from individuals who were unable to attend the community dialogue. The main points stated were:
 - Support for Proportional Representation
 - Public financial assistance for all potential candidates

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Honest, fair campaigns: no robo-calls and misleading advertisements - Concerns with the impact of a referendum on minority views on electoral reform 	
Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)	Date: October 14, 2016
	Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould Member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville

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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