



Town Hall Report on Electoral Reform Public Consultations

Submitted by: David Christopherson, MP (Hamilton Centre) and Scott Duvall, MP (Hamilton Mountain)

October 14, 2016

Context:

In response to the motion passed in the House of Commons that resulted in the appointing of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, MPs David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre) and Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain) undertook to consult their constituents on various aspects of electoral reform. This was achieved through two main approaches.

First, a household mailing was sent to every residence in Hamilton Centre and Hamilton Mountain to seek their input on electoral reform. The mailing contained a short questionnaire and a section for comments.

Second, a town hall meeting was held at Hamilton City Hall on Saturday, September 17th, 2016. The meeting was co-hosted by MPs David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre) and Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain). A presentation on the current electoral system and possible alternatives was given by Craig Scott, Professor of Law, Osgoode Law School, and former Member of Parliament for Toronto Danforth. Mr. Scott moderated an open forum following his presentation and a questionnaire was circulated to all attendees and returned to town hall organizers at the end of the event.

The following section reflects the compiled responses, received to date, to specific questions that were part of the household mailing and the questionnaire circulated at the town hall meeting:

Q 1. A party's seats in Parliament should reflect the percentage of votes they received

Strongly Disagree	15	5	16	26	180	Strongly Agree
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Q 2. Working collaboratively and having cross-party support is vital

Strongly Disagree	10	8	16	35	172	Strongly Agree
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Q 3. Having a local representative is important to me

Strongly Disagree	4	4	12	24	187	Strongly Agree
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Q 4. We should be increasing diversity and gender equity in Parliament

Strongly Disagree	18	9	12	45	130	Strongly Agree
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Q 5. It's time to lower the voting age and better engage young people

Strongly Disagree	58	17	37	25	38	Strongly Agree
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The following section reflects the issues that were raised as part of the town hall meeting, the questionnaire, or in the comments sections of either the household mailing or the questionnaire circulated at the town hall meeting:

- When asked in a questionnaire distributed at the town hall meeting if Canada's voting system needs to change: 56 respondents said yes, and only 1 said no.
- When asked in a questionnaire distributed at the town hall meeting if an electoral system should ensure every vote counts

Strongly Disagree	2	0	2	2	51	Strongly Agree
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- When asked in a questionnaire distributed at the town hall meeting if the electoral system should produce a majority government even if a party does not get a majority of popular vote:

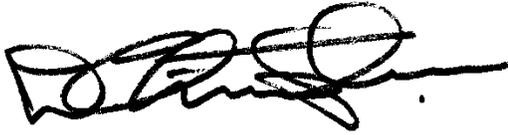
Strongly Disagree	53	7	4	1	2	Strongly Agree
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- The strong majority of people attending our town hall, as well as those who responded to our 10%er, have told us that an element of Proportional Representation should be part of any new electoral system.
- One person stated that Pure Proportional Representation was the most just system. However, with regard to Pure Proportional Representation, multiple constituents expressed concern that PR lists would be closed (chosen by party insiders), and that PR can create coalition governments that are ineffective. Others mentioned the need for a minimum vote threshold in order to reduce the influence of 'special interest parties' in Parliament.
- While many people responded that local representation was important to them, we received comment that a new electoral system could improve local representation, whereas another respondent felt that representation at the federal level was not as important as other levels of government.

- When asked in our questionnaire what voting system is best for Canada, the responses were as follows:
Pure Proportional Representation (11 responses)
Single Transferable Vote (1 response)
Mixed Member Proportional (37 responses)
First Past The Post (3 responses)
Other (4 responses). One person who selected 'other' expressed his preference for a rural-urban proportional system.
- Need to consider aboriginal seats/representation. It was felt by one speaker that proportional representation would help achieve greater representation for First Nations, Aboriginal and Inuit people. A further speaker discussed the New Zealand model, which allocates 7 seats dedicated for Maori/Aboriginal representatives.
- There were concerns raised at our town hall that Northern communities are underrepresented and a need to ensure that Northern voices are being heard as equals to urban voices.
- Several people responded to our 10%er with concerns that increasing diversity should not be the goal of an electoral system and that the 'best candidate' should win.
- Compulsory voting was mentioned by at the town hall and a 10%er response as a positive way to increase voter participation.
- Electronic voting (e-voting) was also mentioned as a possible way to make voting easier.
- Many people expressed their concerns about lowering the voting age, commenting that many youth are not adequately informed/mature enough to participate in the electoral process. When asked if voting age should be lowered to 16: 18 respondents said yes, 21 said no, and 27 were not sure.
- There were mixed feelings as to the need for a referendum on changing the electoral system. Comments were made during our town hall in favour of a referendum prior to any change, while others argued for a referendum after Canadians had had the opportunity to try the new system (as was done in New Zealand). The following is from our questionnaire circulated at our town hall: When it comes to reforming our voting system, the government should: Act alone (0 responses), Have multi-party support (44 responses), Have a referendum prior to adopting a new electoral system (7 responses), Have a referendum after Canadians have had a chance to try the new electoral system (6 responses).

- Based on previous referendum on electoral reform in Ontario, and in light of the recent Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, several people expressed their concern that a referendum would fail as a result of misinformation campaigns and voters not having sufficient knowledge on the issue.

This report is submitted jointly by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Christopherson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Christopherson, M.P.
Hamilton Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Scott Duvall' in a cursive style.

Scott Duvall, M.P.
Hamilton Mountain