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TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



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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)
2016-10-06	7:00-9:00	La Grande Salle, Université du Québec en Outaouais	35 participants + 5 staff
Form: <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MPs offices (to explain different electoral systems) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Structured discussions with summaries shared back to whole group			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems	Replacement of the current voting system	Accessibility and inclusiveness:	
Mandatory voting	Online voting:	Local representation:	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
<p>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> <p>The most commonly stated strength of first-past-the-post was its simplicity. Participants seemed to appreciate that it required only a single round of voting and results were normally determined very quickly after polls closed. The fact that FPTP is familiar to and easily understood by most Canadians was also seen as a strong point.</p> <p>Another frequently noted benefit of FPTP was its tendency to produce majority governments. Some participants appreciated the stability provided by majority governments generated through FPTP: majority governments have clear mandates and a certain amount of time in which to achieve them.</p> <p>Not all participants felt this way about majority governments, however. Some believed that majorities enable governments to "steamroll" legislation into law and preferred the checks on power that come with minority governments. Aside from these differing perspectives on the value of majority government, many participants were uncomfortable with majority governments elected by a minority of voters, a common outcome under FPTP. This was one of the biggest drawbacks of the system named by participants.</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 ERRE@parl.gc.ca

Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

While its advantages were noted by the group, FPTP was never described as a fair system during the discussions. Participants expressed frustration that a vote can have varying degrees of influence depending on the state of a local riding race. Votes were at different times described by participants as “unequal” and “wasted”. Because they feared seeing their vote “wasted”, many participants said they felt the need to vote strategically, something they described as a shortcoming of FPTP. Generally speaking, most participants felt as though their vote did not translate fairly into the House of Commons that is elected.

Other weaknesses of FPTP identified by participants included the inability to separate a candidate and a party, the sense that FPTP exacerbates partisanship.

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)

Alternative vote, List proportional Representation, Single Transferable Vote and Mixed Member Proportional systems were all discussed. Throughout these discussions, proportionality came up most frequently as a key priority in designing Canada’s electoral system. Maintaining or increasing regional and local representation was also important to many who attended the consultation. Generally, most participants wanted to see their vote affect the composition of the House of Commons, and ensure that their community’s voice was well represented. Other features suggested by the group included gender parity, conditions that require more interparty cooperation, and the representation of Canada’s diversity.

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 topic was not directly covered in discussions, but the sense that a vote may not count under our current system was discouraging for many. Some participants also expressed a general sense that politicians as a group were not always listening to constituents. Ideas such as town halls, direct democracy, and consultations were suggested as ways of addressing this disconnect.

Aside from electoral systems, many participants felt that increasing education on democracy in elementary and secondary schools would make more informed and involved citizens. Along with educational programs, lowering the voting age to 16 was suggested as way of increasing participation among first time voters.

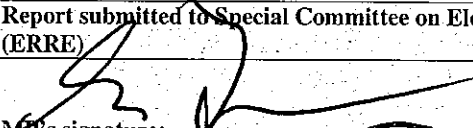
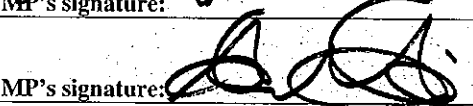
Did participants feel that it should it be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

Mandatory voting was discussed in small groups at the event. Of attendees who offered their opinion on mandatory voting, around two thirds opposed it. They expressed concerns with the influence less informed voters could have over election results if voting was made mandatory, and how the (in)accessibility of voting could limit some citizens’ ability to comply. Many also emphasized that choosing to not participate in elections also represented a democratic choice. About a tenth of the group supported mandatory voting, and suggested that it would increase public participation beyond voting while making election results more representative of the population. The remaining attendees were either ambivalent on the issue or wanted more information before

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deciding.	
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)	
Online voting was discussed at the same time as mandatory voting. In principle, online voting was supported by about half of those who attended the consultation, primarily because it could make voting easier and potentially encourage non-voters to participate. Some raised concerns over identity verification, security of results, and ballot confidentiality. A key question in many discussions was whether online voting would fully replace traditional in-person voting or simply serve as additional option for voters.	
Were any other major topics raised by the participants? (i.e. referendum, women/minority representation, accessibility, voter turnout etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words)	
N/A	
SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS (suggested limit: 1000 words)	
While the participants at the consultation held a diverse set of views, several threads emerged from the evening's discussions. Most participants were not satisfied with the current first-past-the-post system, and some desired a more proportional system. This system should also take into account the diversity of Canada's regions and people. The group did not broadly support mandatory voting, but expressed interest in exploring the use of online voting. Changes to our electoral system should be accompanied by other measures to increase the connection between citizens and their representatives.	
Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)	Date: October 14, 2016
MP's signature: 	Greg Fergus
MP's signature: 	Steven MacKinnon

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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