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The Honourable Maryam Monsef, PC, MP
546-S Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Monsef,

I would like to take this opportunity to present you and the Electoral Reform Committee the results of my town hall, which I held on Saturday, September 24th, 2016 in Brandon, Manitoba.

After tabulating the results of participants, there was a clear majority who would like a referendum before any changes are enacted regarding Canada's democracy.

Furthermore, I would like to register my displeasure with your Parliamentary Secretary's response to my question in the House of Commons on Friday, September 30, 2016, where he avoided answering my question and used over the top political rhetoric to obfuscate your government's decision to deny Canadians their right to vote in a referendum. I can state unequivocally that your government's intent to change Canada's democracy without giving Canadians a direct say on the matter is the wrong approach to take.

It is clear there is no consensus on which system should replace our First-Past-the-Post system. And, it goes without saying that the one vague line found in the Liberal Party platform does not give your government the justification to bypass giving Canadians the final say.

Enclosed you will find the results of my town hall as well as a list of constituents that have signed a petition demanding a referendum before any change is made. I want to thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Best wishes,

Larry N. Maguire, MP
Brandon-Souris

CC The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Mark Holland, MP
Scott Reid, MP
Blake Richards, MP
Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Saturday, September 24th 2016

1:00pm to 3:00pm

Location of Consultation: the Trails West Inn, Brandon, MB

Attendance: 75

Form: Used the library of Parliament's presentation along with a presentation from the MP's office. There was a question and answer session and the meeting finished with an opportunity for attendees to voice their thoughts.

Subjects Discussed:

Voting systems, mandatory voting, online voting, voter turnout, local representation, replacement of the current voting system, and if a referendum should be held.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which alternatives to the current system were discussed? Did participants identify specific features that are important to them in an electoral system?

Changes to the current systems discussed were Alternative Vote, List Proportional Representation, Mixed Member Proportional, and Single Transferable Vote. Attendees vocalized the importance of local representation, citing the role of Members of Parliament as serving and responding to constituents.

There was some conversation regarding the importance of keeping constituency sizes manageable, however, advocates for more proportional electoral systems didn't express those same feelings. On the whole, most respondents believe that MPs should be closely tied to the constituency they represent.

2. Did participants discuss why they feel many Canadians choose not to engage in the democratic process? Did they suggest ways to encourage participation?

Respondents discussed the need to encourage participation through education (particularly with young Canadians). With an understanding of the importance of voting, more citizens would engage within the democratic process.

3. Did participants feel that it should be mandatory to cast a ballot?

A majority of participants did not believe mandatory voting should be implemented. Instead, they thought more incentive to vote should be established through education. Actions such as spoiling the ballot were touched upon, but had no major significance on the view of participants.

4. Did participants discuss online voting? Did they express a desire to maintain current voting practices?

Some participants raised the possibility of online voting as an additional option within our current process. However, those participants questioned the security of online voting, specifying issues such as voter fraud. They stated that online voting should only be implemented if security measures can be established and maintained. Many attendees also believed that online voting shouldn't be a possibility at all given the related security concerns.

5. Were any other major topics raised by the participants?

The question of having a referendum was discussed by participants. A majority of attendees believe a referendum is necessary to provide citizens with a direct say on a fundamental change to Canadian democracy. They further stated that a referendum should be held once the proposed alternative system is decided upon. Finally, participants highlighted the need for a clear question on the referendum. Participants who do not think a referendum should be held cited the monetary cost associated with this process.

Summary of Key Recommendations and Comments from Participants:

Overall, a majority of participants do not believe the current electoral system should be changed. Those who do want a new system recommended Mixed Member Proportional. Participants discussed the significance of constituency representation by Members of Parliament, highlighting the importance of dialogue between constituents and their elected official.

Moreover, a majority of attendees do not think mandatory voting should be implemented as it is the decision of Canadians whether or not to vote. Instead, they recommended an increase in citizen education surrounding voting, especially for youth, as a means to increase voter turnout. While some participants are supportive of online voting, they did raise security concerns such as fraud. Others believe the associated security concerns are too great to allow citizens to vote online.

Finally, a majority of participants underscored the need for a referendum in order to give citizens a direct voice on a change to the electoral system. They stated the need for the referendum to have a clear question on the proposed alternative electoral system. Other attendees cited the associated cost to a referendum as a reason not to hold one.