

RON MCKINNON, MP
COQUITLAM – PORT COQUITLAM

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
 CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
 CANADA

RON MCKINNON, DÉPUTÉ
COQUITLAM – PORT COQUITLAM

RAPPORT SUR LES CONSULTATIONS
PUBLIQUES SUR LA RÉFORME
ÉLECTORALE

CONSULTATION			
Date of the Meeting	Time and Length (start time and end time)	Location of Consultation	Total Number of People in Attendance
October 11, 2016	7pm to 9:30pm	Douglas College, Coquitlam	45
Form: X Use of the Library of Parliament’s visual presentation X Presentation from the MP’s office X Open microphone X Question and answer session X Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Breakout session			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED			
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 Ranked-Pairs

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

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?

It was widely understood by all participants that the 2015 election was the last to elect members to the House of Commons with first past the post voting scheme. Participants widely recognized that first past the post does not accurately reflect voter intentions, and that candidates can be elected without having received a majority of the vote.

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.)?

The Library of Parliament presentation was largely used, and included background on First Past the Post, Alternative Vote, List Proportional Representation, Single Transferable Vote and Mixed Member Proportional. For the purposes of this consultation, a slide was added to introduce and discuss Ranked-Pairs. After the presentation and some discussion the participants broke themselves into 6 breakout groups to discuss various electoral systems as well as online and compulsory voting.

While there was diversity of opinions among participants, breakout groups were asked to reach some consensus on electoral systems based on informed discussion. Each breakout group was asked to appoint one note-taker who would act as the group's spokesperson to report back to the all participants at the end of the breakout session.

There was considerable consensus that there should be some sort mixed member proportional representation used to allocate seats in the House of Commons in the next general election. A great deal of dialogue also centered around how first past the post would be replaced for those members not elected proportionally and that some sort of ranking should take place, whether Ranked-Pairs or another scheme of ranking voting preferences.

A significant amount of discussion centered on how proportional representation should be used, and for an urban riding, a fair bit of concern was displayed to ensure that rural, northern Canadians and areas that are sparsely populated were adequately represented under proportional representation. It was widely recognized that if proportional representation is used, careful consideration must be used to ensure that urban interests do not trump rural and northern interests.

To strengthen the case for some sort of proportional representation, one group argued that many of the OECD countries had some form of proportional representation. They also argued that under this system, elected representatives would work better together for the greater common good of the

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

people they are elected to represent.

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

Participants reported that votes should be incentivized in some regard and that voting had to appeal to young Canadians. Some discussion centered on youth and how they feel that their interests are not represented in government.

As a way to incentivize a vote, it was suggested that the former \$1 per vote electoral financing regime may have worked, as there was a value placed on the vote. It was thought that under that regime, a vote was not necessarily perceived as “wasted” as even if the preferred candidate was not the victor, there was still a financial gain to the political party.

Did participants feel that it should be mandatory to cast a ballot? (Can include spoiling a ballot.)

Six out of five breakout groups reported that their group did not favour mandatory voting. Mandatory voting was felt to be a harsh, heavy-handed approach, particularly if traditional polling stations are not bolstered with online voting. It was widely suggested, even in the absence of mandatory voting, that ballots should have some provision to be easily spoiled.

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.)

By and large, breakout groups showed some interest in online voting, citing its convenience and appeal to youth. While on the surface it looks appealing, it is generally understood that there are several security issues related to online voting, that systems can be vulnerable to hacking, but most importantly a voter is likely to be coerced or influenced into not voting their true intention.

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

Five out of six breakout groups reported that no referendum is required to change the current electoral system.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Special thanks are in order to Dr. Mark Pickup, Associate Professor in Political Science at Simon Fraser University for agreeing to participate in this town hall as an expert resource in electoral systems. Dr. Pickup’s input was extremely valuable in helping guide the discussion and helping correct some misunderstandings of various election systems, both in theory and those used in other countries.

There is a great interest in electoral reform in Coquitlam – Port Coquitlam and we had a strong

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

showing of engaged participants. I advertised this event quite widely, sending several hundred direct emails to constituents who have expressed interested in electoral reform since the October 2015 election, an article appeared in the Tri City News, as well as a quarter page advertisement to publicize the town hall. I wanted to ensure that everyone who wanted a say on electoral reform had the ability to do so.

After the presentation on different electoral systems and on mandatory and online voting, participants split themselves into 6 breakout groups and were asked to reach a consensus amongst the group on their preferred electoral system and on mandatory and online voting. All groups were asked to present their findings to the all participants.

All breakout groups provided some very valuable insight on how to move away from first past the post.

Chiefly, there was broad agreement that any system put in place must be easy to understand, as some systems such as Alternative Vote and Single Transferable Vote are complex with many moving parts. It was also mentioned from several participants that the ballot must be simple and straight forward.

While there most participants favoured some sort of Mixed Member Proportional, there was broad agreement that gathering voter intent is necessary through some sort of ranking process. I believe this is where Ranked-Pairs can be of great benefit.

I heard from many participants that there is great faith in the Special Committee on Electoral Reform in their ability to make an informed recommendation to the government in its final report, largely because of the way it was structured. The committee and committee members are held in high esteem by my constituents largely because of its structure and all-party membership.

In the end, the participants at the town hall want an electoral system in place that is fair, balanced and works for the common good of all Canadians, regardless of party affiliation.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13, 2016

MP's signature:



Ron McKinnon, MP

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