

**HARJIT S. SAJJAN
VANCOUVER SOUTH**

**TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION**



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

**HARJIT S. SAJJAN
VANCOUVER SOUTH**

**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
Saturday, October 1, 2016	2 hours (2:00pm – 4:00pm)	Killarney Secondary School	~ 40 participants, 3 volunteers, 3 staff
Form:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Small group dialogues (of ~6 people) followed by an open microphone sharing of ideas discussed, facilitated by a moderator			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: ✓	Replacement of the current voting system: ✓	Voter turnout: ✓	Accessibility and inclusiveness: ✓
Mandatory voting: ✓	Online voting: ✓	Local representation: ✓	Other (please specify and describe below): Senate Reform, Candidate Selection Processes

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?</p> <p>Participants identified both strengths and weaknesses of our current system before delving deeper into more topic-based discussions. Points made in favour of the current system were that it is simple, traditional, and easy to understand. Some said that they thought it was positive that the system has a tendency to produce majority governments with strong mandates. Additionally, there were positive comments about how governing parties have historically been moderate on the political scale. Participants also appreciated that there was local representation.</p> <p>On the other hand, some challenges identified about the current system by participants were that they felt it leads to a two-party system, encourages strategic voting, a minority of the votes can create a majority government, and that party discipline and fundraising/support can have more influence than local issues for a Member of Parliament after their election. Participants expressed concerns about the value of votes, in that many voters were not having their opinions heard or represented. They felt that a better system would give more of a voice to smaller parties.</p>
<p>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.)?</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

We had a variety of responses from participants regarding specific systems. There were proponents for each of three systems: maintaining First Past the Post, supporters of a ranked ballot system, and those who were in favour of a mixed electoral system similar to that employed in Germany.

Additionally, there were discussions of the principles/values and key features of Canadian democracy. Proportionality, local representation, representation by population, and the feeling within the electorate that their votes are valued is what were identified as most important.

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

Discussion of this topic included the thought that many people generally perceive politics negatively. Participants noted that there can be language and cultural barriers to learning about the electoral process and subsequently participating in it. Participants also felt that many people do not participate because of a lack of education, and an ability to make an informed decision.

They felt that education – about the electoral process, candidates, etc. was critical to creating an engaging system and a more representative government. It was also suggested that increased information about why decisions are made could lead to better understanding of government. Even if people do not necessarily agree with a decision or direction taken, the thought is that with more knowledge they can at least try to understand and engage with it.

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

This topic was not thoroughly discussed. There were some who expressed support of mandatory voting, with the understanding that this might lead to better education about the process and that people would in turn make informed decisions.

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.)

Online Voting was discussed, and there was some support for it. A few participants noted that it could help to save time in people's busy lives, and that it could potentially appeal to a younger demographic.

There were also proponents of maintaining the current voting practices. Some even want to maintain the electoral system of First Past the Post, as they feel it is straightforward and easy to understand.

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

Generally, participants liked the idea of the Senate or a Chamber of sober second thought, but there were several who felt that this also needed reform. This led to the creation of an additional group for this topic. Suggestions included that Senators also be elected, and that their terms/ability to serve be limited so that they do not have lifetime appointments, but only for a number of years before their service is complete.

Additionally, one group decided to have a discussion regarding the process of Candidate Selection prior to elections. They felt that having more transparency throughout the beginning steps of the electoral process could create more knowledge of the system and engagement with it.

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

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

There was consensus among participants that education is a key facet to the electoral system. They felt that a lack of education has led to disengagement with the current system. Additionally, they expressed that a lack of information on why things are done has created a situation in which the electorate does not understand decisions and processes, creating negative perceptions and fueling apathy. Whatever system is chosen, it is clear that broad education, bearing in mind potential language and cultural barriers, will be critical to (re)engaging voters.

There was also significant feedback regarding the Canadian Senate. While participants generally agreed that a chamber of second thought was a positive aspect of Canadian democracy, they also believed that it is in need of reform.

We were pleased with our public dialogue. It was great to see that there was a diverse group of people participating, which we felt reflected the diversity of this constituency. Perhaps some of the most inspiring moments of the dialogue came when languages other than English were spoken between some participants in an attempt to better involve those who were less confident in English. While we did not plan for or anticipate this happening, it was great to see that members of the community wanted to try and engage as fully as possible with one another in the conversation.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: October 13, 2016



MP's signature:

Harjit S. Sajjan

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.

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