

MARC SERRÉ MP
NICKEL BELT

TOWN HALL REPORT
ON ELECTORAL REFORM
PUBLIC CONSULTATION



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

MARC SERRÉ DÉPUTÉ
NICKEL BELT

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)
1. Sept 7, 2016	5 to 7:15pm	Public Library Sturgeon Falls	8
2.			
3.			
4.			
Form: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of the Library of Parliament's visual presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation from the MP's office <input type="checkbox"/> Open microphone <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Question and answer session <input type="checkbox"/> Guest speaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):			
SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (summary)			
Voting systems: <input type="checkbox"/>	Replacement of the current voting system: <input type="checkbox"/>	Voter turnout: <input type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility and inclusiveness: <input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory voting: <input type="checkbox"/>	Online voting: <input type="checkbox"/>	Local representation: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify and describe below) <input type="checkbox"/>

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>For the most part attendees were still satisfied with the current electoral system. They agreed that a referendum on electoral reform was not necessarily the proper way to go about changing the system, as voter turnout is often low and people tend to vote without being particularly educated about the issues at hand. Two attendees commented that referendum voters often vote without giving the subject matter much thought or are easily swayed by advertising campaigns and social media. They felt that greater education regarding the current system was required as well as further education on the alternatives and its implications. They discussed the fact that we elect our members of Parliament in order for them to make decisions for the general public. Therefore with our MP's being more educated on such issues the decisions should ultimately be done by them with consultation, eliminating the need for a referendum at this time. The reasoning for not wanting too much change is that they felt a new system would benefit the Liberal party at this time and would</p>

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Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)
131, rue Queen Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Deadline: Friday, October 14, 2016

leave other parties; namely the conservatives out of the equation. While some aspects of the “first past the post” system do pose some problems more specifically for Canadians in rural ridings, the attendees did not see the urgency for a total revamp of the current system. However they did raise concerns for Senate reform and regional representation. Senate reform seemed to be more important and a much more pressing issue at this time, than electoral reform.

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)

Many alternatives were discussed. More specifically the option of a preferential ballot, where voters can pick their second and third choices as is the case in party nominations. Mr. Serré was able to speak in detail what a preferential ballot was and clarify some misconceptions regarding the practice. However again attendees believed that this would ultimately favor the Liberal party as it is believed that the Liberal party is most often the second choice for all voters whether it is Conservative or NDP. (With the only exception with the Green party voters who would more than likely choose the NDP as their second choice.)

Another alternative discussed in greater detail was a system close to the Australian way of election that would see two ballots, one for the leader of the country and another for their local representatives. However attendees unanimously disagreed about the practice of simply voting for a preferred party as opposed to a specific person. They would prefer to vote for individual MP’s as opposed to having the winning party decide and appoint Members of Parliament for each riding. They felt that utilizing this practice, that we would end up with representatives that are appointed from other regions and they could be dangerously out of touch with the needs of the people they represent. They believed that this system would ensure that individuals would be appointed due to party favoritism as opposed to appointing the best person for the geographical locations in question. No one in attendance was in favor of voting for a party instead of a specific person whether it be on the national or local level.

One major concern that was discussed and clarified with by MP Marc Serré, is that attendees were under the impression that our Prime Minister already had chosen his preferred system of voting and that major discussions that were taking place were whether or not to continue with the first past the post system or to adopt Mr. Trudeau preferred way of voting, which is to utilize the preferential ballot system which again would favor the Liberal party and make extremely difficult to ever elect any other party at the National Leadership level.

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)

Attendees did discuss the issues of Canadians not wanting to be engaged in the democratic process. The main concern that was brought up is that Canadians feel too comfortable and relaxed in our country. AS there is no great urgency for change it is difficult to engage those who feel that regardless of which government is in power, we have things very good in Canada.

Another issue that attendees believed kept people away from the ballot box is the belief of regardless who is in power, things basically always stay the same and that individuals make no difference and their opinions are irrelevant.

The general contentious from those in attendance is that Canadians require greater education regarding the democratic process including the engagement of young Canadians throughout high school, College and university.

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

All participants agreed that Canada should have a mandatory system of voting; however there was some concern and questions of how this can be enforced as well as ensuring easy accessibility for

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all Canadians. Some suggestions included that eligible voters not be able to access any federal programs if they were unable to perform their civic duties of voting, without a valid reason. They also suggested greater education about voters having the right to take time off of work in order to vote and that penalties should be imposed on employers who do not give the opportunity to their employees to vote. While everyone agrees that mandatory voting is essential in a country such as Canada, the belief that fines or possibly jail times would be highly ineffective and unfair.

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)

There was some discussion about online voting, while attendees agreed that this option would be beneficial to make voting more accessible to all Canadians; there is a great deal concern about security. How can online voting be safe and secure when taking into consideration the various possibilities of online scams, hacks and crime such as identity theft? They did use the US past federal election between George W Bush and Al Gore as an example of how things can go terrible wrong with an electronic system. Online voting while accessible creates a great deal of doubt around cheating. How can the government ensure that all votes are legitimate and not hacked by the electronically savvy? There is a great deal of doubt that it is at all possible to stop would be cheaters or hackers. How do we ensure that the proper people are voting? On the other side of the coin, if I.P addresses are what are taken into consideration, how do we ensure that families with several voters in the household will have the opportunity to vote under one address?

Were any other major topics raised by the participants? (i.e. referendum, women/minority representation, accessibility, voter turnout etc.) (suggested limit: 500 words)

Considering the geography and population of our riding in Nickel Belt, there were three major themes that repeated themselves throughout the consultation. One being the need to have better regional representation for rural and northern ridings, a general concern was the fact that due to population density northern and rural ridings do not seem to have a proper voice in Ottawa. The end result is the assumption here in Ontario for example: that many decisions are based on GTA MP's who are completely out of touch or are not concerned with the unique needs of those here in the North or rural communities in general. A specific example given was the past laws imposed on Bear hunts. While the law banning seasonal hunts was satisfactory for urban centers and environmentalist, it did create a great deal of problems and safety issues for Northern Rural communities. There is a general feeling that with changes to the current system that this issue will become worse instead of better. While there were no specific suggestions as to how to improve this issue, the feeling of not having proportional /regional representation was unanimous. Another concern discussed was accessibility for indigenous communities as well as proper education on the democratic process and how it affects these communities. Again there was concern that these populations do not have proper accessibility to the voting process and that they are not properly represented in the current electoral system.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS (suggested limit: 1000 words)

While all attendees did show some concern for the current "first past the post" system that often leaves rural and northern communities out in the dark when it comes to decision making, there was some concern that electoral reform as it is currently being discussed could end up making the situation worse. More specifically; if the Australian model of voting becomes adopted, that parties could appoint MP's who are out of touch or uneducated about our specific regional concerns. All attendees were unanimous in thinking that it is preferential to choose a specific person as their Member of Parliament, as opposed to party appointed representatives. They would like to see a more proportional system of voting, that does not hand off specific decision making to densely

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populated areas such as the GTA, who have a much different way of life as opposed to rural communities which also have a greater number of indigenous voters.

That being said, attendees did question the urgency in changing the entire system. They seemed to prefer taking a slower approach in order to get the changes right as opposed to simply rushing the process in order to fulfill campaign promises. The attendees felt that senate reform is an issue that should be tackled first or perhaps hand and hand with electoral reform. They have commented that the senate system in Canada is seriously outdated and does not seem to fulfill its intended purpose as the decision making/voting process that is excessively partisan.

The attendees were happy to hear that the committee on electoral reform spanned across all parties and was therefore non-partisan. They were also relieved to hear that no specific alternative had yet been decided upon as was previously thought. While they were satisfied with the consultation process and agreed that a referendum was unnecessary as officials are elected for the reason of being able to make informed decisions on behalf of their constituents. However it was agreed that more education was required ahead of the consultations regarding specific options including democratic models throughout the world. While all attendees were very political and considered themselves "in the know" when it came to the political and/or democratic process, they all agreed that they knew very little about specific democracies and electoral process with the exception of the United States. All were in agreement that the American version of democracy is a perfect example of a failed electoral system and was quite susceptible to corporate influence. While all would prefer to be able to vote first for their leader and then for their local representatives separately; adopting the American version of politics would be disastrous for Canadians. They did also comment on the problems with campaign financing in the US; seeing the Canadian limitations of amounts donated as well as the elimination of corporate donations as a much more balanced and fair approach in order to essentially eliminate corporate dictation of policy. Mr. Serré was able to explain the great differences between campaign finance practices in both countries as the rules were unclear to the participants of this town hall.

Another concern not yet mentioned in this report is the belief that the office of the Prime Minister currently has too much power and that electoral reform to a system favoring the Liberal party may in consequence render this issue even worse than it is already at this time. There were some questions addressing the issue of partisan politics both in the House of Commons as well as in the Senate, asking Mr. Serré if he is in fact "allowed" to vote his own conscious in the House or if we were ultimately seeing the repeat of ten years with Mr. Harper obliging Members of Parliament to vote with the party at all times, rather than the best interest of their constituents.

In summary as a rural, northern community/ Riding the major themes concerning attendees is as always proportional and regional representation as well as education and accessibility of the Indigenous population. All attendees were given the proper information for them to make their suggestions for the committee and allowing their voices to be heard in the consultation process. For the most part the town hall was very positive and attendees were satisfied with MP Marc Serre's ability to answer specific questions with honesty and integrity and attendees hoped that there would be more educational materials available regarding the different democratic models throughout the globe.

Report submitted to Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)

Date: Oct 14 /16

MP's signature:



(Name)

Marc Serré M.P.

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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