

## Electoral Reform Event Results (Laurentian Leadership Centre)

1. What was the nature of the event: (select one)

Add-on Dialogue

Coffee Dialogue

Community Dialogue

Town Hall

Other

2. What date was the event held? October 6

3. Where was the event held? The Laurentian Leadership Centre, 252 Metcalfe St., Ottawa

4. Who hosted the event? The Laurentian Leadership Centre

5. Approximately how many people attended the event? 35

6. Brief description of the event: The majority of attendees were under 30 years old. We had some plenary session but most of the discussion was in breakout groups (2) facilitated by two university professors: Janet Epp Buckingham (Political Studies) and Bob Burkinshaw (History). Polls were taken at the beginning and end of the evening and there was significant difference in people's favoured electoral system. In the end, there was marked preference for the Mixed Member Proportional System.

### General

1. Did you have a dialogue about electoral and democratic reform in general? Yes / No

a. If yes, what were the highlights of the dialogue? (open field)

The general consensus was that electoral reform is not an important topic for Canadians in general. Those in attendance were not aware of very many people they know having participated in any dialogue about the issue, nor were most people aware of the options being considered.

The group noted that changing the way Canadians vote is much more significant than just changing the way candidates are chosen. It will affect the democratic institutions fundamentally. It is therefore extremely important.

More than half those in attendance thought that a referendum is necessary before instituting electoral reform. A vital part of that will be to educate Canadians on the various options.

Very few of the participants favoured e-voting, feeling that if people were not motivated enough to get to a poll, they should not be voting. As well, there was concern that e-voting was subject to hacking and cyber-attacks. There also concern about the potential for abuse of the system.

There was also little support for mandatory voting.

## Democratic principles and values

1. Did you have a dialogue about the principles and values that underpin Canada's democracy? Yes / No

a. If yes, what were the highlights of the dialogue? This dialogue was about what principles are important so we did not identify those least important.

b. What principle(s) did participants identify as most important? The most significant principle was that the democratic system be representative of voters' wishes. Other important principles were that it be accountable, easy to understand, and that it facilitate participation. Canadians must also have confidence in the system.

c. What principle(s) did participants identify as least important?

## Canadian federal electoral reforms

1. Did you have a dialogue about different potential Canadian federal electoral reforms? Yes / No

a. If yes, what were the highlights of the dialogue?

## Proposed Electoral Systems

- Current System (FPTP)
  - Strengths
    - Familiar
    - Easy to understand
    - Tried and true
    - Regional representation
    - Accountable to constituency
    - Easy in/easy out on voting day
    - Changing the system might be difficult for older generations to understand
  - Weakness
    - Not representative
    - Can lead to strategic voting
    - Old
    - Exacerbates regionalism
    - People feel their votes don't matter
    - Small parties with strong localized support do far better than small parties with broad support
    - "Wasted" votes
    - Minority of votes with majority power
    - Disconnect from minorities
- Proportional (Closed list)
  - Strength
    - Every vote counts
    - Reflective of the popular vote
    - Simple – involves voting for only one party
    - More unity in each party (collective campaigning)
    - Power is divided

- Parties would have better ability to control for equality in different areas – gender, ethnicity, etc – through how they arrange their list
    - Parties could be judged on the quality of their list (for this or other reasons)
  - Weakness
    - You lose constituencies
    - No direct accountability to specific area or region
    - Party battle is all that matters
    - Lower list candidates don't have chance
    - Don't know the person you are electing
    - Only about the party
    - No incentive to meet people one-on-one, more "back room"
    - More likely to have minority governments
- Proportional (Open List)
  - Strength
    - Accurate representation – can vote for who you think deserves it
    - Closely matches proportion
    - Can vote for both candidates and parties
    - Provides options for voters, especially if they've done their research
    - Closer representative of popular vote, puts more power in the hands of voters in terms of choosing representatives
    - Potential for voters to rebuke the "party brass"
    - You could spread your votes out among the parties
  - Weakness
    - Hard to be informed
    - Seats spread too thin
    - Requires that people be educated/knowledgeable
    - Creates mushy middle
    - No Specific regional responsibility
    - People might do 'eeny-meeny-miny-mo,'
    - Candidates can get votes that weren't intended for them
    - On a municipal level where voters can vote for more than one councillor, it can be complex
- Single Transferable vote
  - Strength
    - Greater representation / choice
    - Members/candidates have incentive for strong local representation and service
    - Proportionality
    - Combines options for voters and proportionality, ends up closer to proportionality than FPTP – your second or third choice could be the one that puts someone over the top
    - Ireland uses this system successfully
    - In diverse ridings you could have all people more closely represented
    - More MPs per riding

- Allows for small parties to gain seats
    - Larger ridings in cities as a plus, FPTP boundaries can seem pretty arbitrary
  - Weakness
    - Conflict between popular and unpopular members
    - Favours Liberals as middle ground
    - Doesn't seem logical
    - Different parties in one riding have conflict
    - Would need to be a comprehensive education campaign
    - Could be higher cost for education
    - Can be very confusing/complicated
    - Once you're over the vote quota it seems arbitrary how the votes are distributed/transferred – how is that decided?
    - Not necessarily a weakness but it would almost have to be done electronically otherwise it would take forever / be way too open to questionable decisions in terms of how 2<sup>nd</sup> and third choices are made, could result in low voter trust of the system
    - Tends towards minority governments
- Ranked Ballot
  - Strength
    - No Wasted vote
    - Easy to understand
    - Ensure majority has support
    - Easier to provide preferences and to rank things rather than just choosing one candidate
    - Less pressure
    - Gives the process legitimacy
    - No vote splitting
    - Effective
    - Lots of options
  - Weakness
    - Makes it difficult to achieve majority / pass legislation
    - Wasted votes – does not solve proportional problem
    - More pressure on voters to be educated on their people
    - Get crazy parties
    - Centrist party would almost always win in contested ridings
- Mixed Member Proportional
  - Strength
    - Easy to understand
    - Proper representation
    - Votes matter
    - Proportional vote
    - Balances constituency accountability with proportional representation (each party represents percentage of popular vote)
    - Would only require modest reforms
    - Doesn't force voters to vote against MP they want

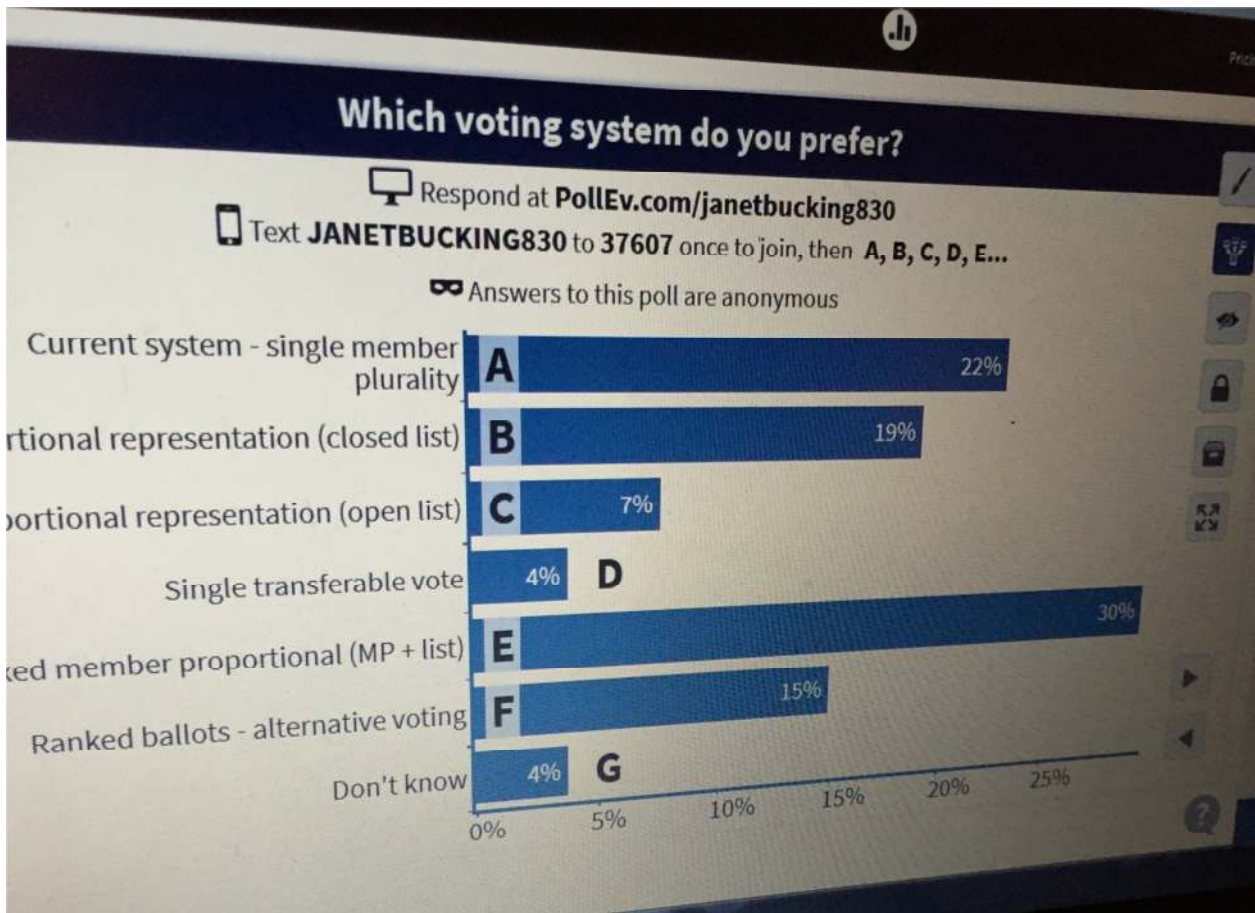
- Vote for person you want and the party you agree with
- Encourages parties to have more national strategy
- Don't need to "compromise" your vote
- Value in having MPs who have a bigger picture, aren't only concerned with their constituency's interests
- Parties would have better ability to control for equality in different areas – gender, ethnicity, etc – through how they arrange their list
- Parties could be judged on the quality of their list (for this or other reasons)
- Good middle ground
- Weakness
  - Creates two classes of politicians – those representing constituents and those representing a party.
  - Party instability
  - Confuses process
  - A lot would depend on how parties allocate the seats
  - Constituent seats are still FPTP
  - Need to increase the size of ridings or have a larger House of Commons

### Additional feedback

1. Did the dialogue yield additional thoughts you would like to share? Yes / No
- a. If yes, what were those additional thoughts?

Here are the polls from the beginning and end of the evening:

Beginning:



End:

