

To: The Electoral Reform Parliamentary Committee

**Private Dialogue on Electoral Reform**

1. What was the nature of the event?  
Private meeting/dialogue.
2. What date was the event held?  
October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.
3. Where was the event held?  
415 Greenview Ave.  
Ottawa, ON K2B 8G5
4. Who hosted the event?  
Fair Vote Canada volunteers hosted it as a local initiative in Ottawa West-Nepean.
5. Approximately how many people attended the event?  
Seven.
6. Brief description of the event.  
We presented slides to encourage discussion of:
  - a) democratic values;
  - b) FPTP, AV, PR (party lists), STV and MMP;
  - c) mandatory vote; and,
  - d) online vote.

In addition, we explained the basis of the Rural-Urban Proportional system.

Then, each one of the attendees filled in a questionnaire to provide their feedback and thoughts for the ERRE committee.

**General**

7. Did you have a dialogue about electoral and democratic reform in general?

Yes

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

a) Everyone in this group would like that a form or another of proportional representation be implemented in Canada.

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b) There was also consensus that the current channels for public consultation on electoral reform (coffee dialogues; NPO events/dialogues; town hall meetings; ERRE's online questionnaire; etc.) are legitimate methods to gauge public opinion.

c) Four out of seven participants either opposed online voting or did not know whether it should be implemented. Two thought that it should be made available but only to disabled people. One supported online voting.

The majority (6/7) felt that online voting could be hacked.

d) With regard to mandatory voting, three out of seven did not support it; 3/7 thought that it could boost voter turnout; and one did not know.

### **Democratic principles and values**

9. Did you have a dialogue about the principles and values that underpin Canada's democracy?

Yes

If yes, what were the highlights of the dialogue?

There was discussion, but no consensus was reached about what value is the most important one.

10. What principle(s) did participants identify as most important?

Two out of seven thought that they are all important. The rest of the group chose either one principle, or another. Opinion was divided.

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

None.

### **Canadian federal electoral reforms**

12. Did you have a dialogue about different potential Canadian federal electoral reforms?

Yes

If yes, what were the highlights of the dialogue?

a) All participants felt that First-Past-The-Post is unfair.

b) The majority of attendees are familiar to a greater or lesser degree with the electoral systems the ERRE committee is considering.

c) All participants feel that First-Past-The-Post is undemocratic, and that the share of seats should be equal to the share of votes.

d) The majority supported the Mixed Member Proportional system. Others preferred Single Transferable Vote and open party lists.

e) The majority would prefer that government were obliged to consult with other parties and make compromises.

### **Additional feedback**

Did the dialogue yield additional thoughts you would like to share?

Yes.

If yes, what were those additional thoughts?

Participants' comments to the ERRE committee are:

"No referendum - it is not a good way to address this issue."

"ERRE (*committee meetings*) being hosted in town halls is fine. When supported by the MP, that might be problematic with respect to biased representation at the meeting."

"If high voter turnout is to be achieved, the system must be as simple as possible. The definition of boundaries, if they are changed, must be non-political and based on proportionality."

"Electoral Reform.

### **"The Why**

"I spent years having an MP who did not represent my values, and cared only about voters who liked his party.

- My vote during those years was wasted
- I did not have an MP I could go to with my concerns
- This is NOT what democracy should be

"I believe in parliamentary democracy, believe that the opposition and the media should hold the government to account, but that's NOT what I see when I watch question period(s).

- It's a side show filled with questions and comments meant to mislead, deceive and score points.

" There are risks in the current system as we saw during the Harper years. It was shocking to have a government that refused to listen to experts, and refused to care about what the majority of Canadians thought.

- Harper years taught us that our democracy is vulnerable and we need to fix it

" The adversarial nature of the current system is offensive and a turn off to many voters.

- Attack ads, win at all costs, and "gotcha" politics have become the norm- a far cry from what democracy should be
- When every party does this, and they do, just read their fundraising emails, the result is voters think "a pox on all your houses" - How is this healthy democracy? How can we have faith in this system?
- Media buys into the adversarial nature of political system and often tries to stir up controversy, rather than inform the public

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" The Plurality/Majority system works for a 2 party democracy, but ours has become more diverse than this.

- The "Right" can win a majority because the vote on the "Left" is split, and the result that almost 2/3 of Canada voted left, doesn't count

" The future of our democracy being healthy means we need to change the system.

- It needs to be more collaborative
- Parties need to work together
- If 2/3 of Canada prefer progressive policies, then let's have a coalition government that represents the 2/3
- ALL voices must be heard, every Canadian should feel that their values are part of the discussion
- Stable government is not necessarily a majority government. We have seen how one majority government can legislate in one direction, and the next majority government does the opposite

**" The What**

" Trudeau has made a good start at engaging us in the hope for a better system

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- mandate letters
- changes to the senate
- now we are counting on him to take the next step and bring an end to FPTP
- and bring about a PR system which will incentivize politicians to cooperate, work together."