

October 4th, 2016

To:
Special Committee on Electoral Reform
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

From:
Sjeng Derkx and Ann Remnant

Nelson, BC,

Report on Electoral Reform Tour of Kootenay-Columbia

September 22 to October 2, 2016

In response to Minister Maryam Monsef's invitation to hold community dialogues on the subject of electoral reform.

Dear Committee members,

We organized and facilitated 8 community meetings throughout Kootenay-Columbia, and drove 1,877 kilometers, to discuss electoral reform and voting systems, mandatory, online voting, and lowering the voting age to 16.

Here's the schedule of the meetings:

Sept. 22	Revelstoke	7-8:30pm	Conversations Cafe
Sept. 23	Golden	7-8:30pm	St. Andrews's United Church
Sept. 25	Nelson	7-8:30pm	Senior's Centre
Sept. 27	Kaslo	7-8:30pm	Senior's Centre
Sept. 28	Riondel	2-3:30pm	Senior's Room
Sept. 30	Creston	4:30-6pm	Public Library
Oct. 1	Kimberley	1-2:30pm	Public Library
Oct. 2	Cranbrook	3-4:30pm	Public Library

Media coverage was through local newspapers, local radio and BC wide CBC and Facebook. Local organizers in every community posted on facebook, put up posters and advertised daily on community e papers, as well as some phoning and emailing. The meetings were casual, grassroots and quintessentially friendly Canadian. The 82 people who attended the meetings were generally older, but not exclusively so. Most did not know each other, apart from recognizing each other as being fellow residents of the same town. The sign in sheets for the meetings are also included, except for the Golden and Revelstoke meetings.

We started the meetings by introducing ourselves and giving some background information. The powerpoint presentation lasted approximately 1/2 hour, and touched on the history of voting in Canada, why we are discussing electoral reform, the Liberal promise and ERRE's work. We then looked at the main pros and cons of FPTP, Alternative Vote, Single Transferable Vote, Mixed Member Proportional and Rural-Urban Proportional, as well as the possible local impacts of these systems. We concluded with a few general facts such as the electoral reform time line, other countries' experiences, polls and final words.

We allowed about an hour for questions on the various systems and discussion on online voting, lowering the voting age to 16 and mandatory voting. At the end, we handed out questionnaires, which are included in the package. Here are the compiled results, the comments are well worth reading.

Electoral Reform Input Form

		Yes	No
1/ Do you support proportional representation?		63	6
If 'Yes', which do you prefer?	Single Transferable Vote (STV)	15	
	Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	15	
	Rural-Urban PR (RU-PR)	29	
If 'No', which do you prefer?	First Past the Post (FPTP)	3	
	Alternative Vote (AV)		
2/Do you support electronic/internet voting?		19	45
3/Do you think the voting age should be lowered to 16?		41	30
4/Do you think voting should be mandatory?		18	48

The attendees were certainly not all of one voice on any question, as the replies and comments on the included questionnaires show. It was interesting to see common threads in the conversations, despite being 8 separate meetings. Some of the issues which came up in most discussions were:

- the need for civic education in schools,
- concern about security issues with online voting,
- concern that mandatory voting may not lead to better voting.

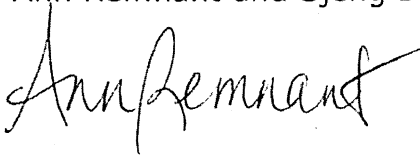
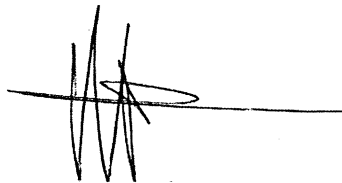
Many of the attendants thanked us for the presentation, and appreciated that it was non partisan and informative. The discussion clearly generated a lot of interest and excitement in the room and it was very rewarding to see so many people engaged and becoming sources of information about electoral reform in their own circles.

We are very happy overall with the response to our tour, and hope the comments and replies of the attendants will be considered and useful in your important work.

If you have any questions regarding this, please contact us for more information. We did our best to be open, fair, and allow everyone a chance to express their opinions without judgment.

Lastly, we are deeply grateful to Minister Monsef and to ERRE for inviting this open and honest discussion on changing our electoral system. Long live democracy!

Yours sincerely,
Ann Remnant and Sjeng Derkx

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Remnant".A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sjeng Derkx".

