

# Brief to the Government of Canada's Special Committee on Electoral Reform

October 2016

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On Sept 21, 2016, there was a community dialogue on electoral reform in Wasaga Beach, Ontario with 12 participants from the general public. The following questions were discussed with a summary of the responses below.

Discussion Question 1: Are there things that you like and/or concerns about the alternative voting systems? If so, what? What values and principles do you think ought to be prioritized when designing an electoral system for Canada?

Response: **Accountability, stability, representativeness, reliability (ie. Integrity) and proportionality** were named as important values in a new electoral system. There was also emphasis on simplicity of the ballot to prevent seniors and others from being 'scared off' from voting. For any new electoral system, the consensus was that there needs to be a national education campaign about the new system to ensure that voters understand the changes. The group also wanted every vote to count more that it currently does, to prevent strategic voting and for governments to better reflect the views of the 'median voter'.

Discussion Question 2: Have you and/or the people you know faced barriers or challenges when voting in the past? If so, what and how can they be overcome? Are there certain groups that you feel are excluded from the current electoral system? If so, why and what can be done?

Response: Aboriginal people, young adults at school away from home, people with disabilities, incarcerated people and homeless people were named as groups who are under-represented and/or face barriers to voting. A suggested solution is to **switch to an electoral system that includes more diverse candidates** (ie. More diversity in ethnicity and gender) so people can see themselves represented and are more motivated to vote. Perhaps also make it easier for students who are away from home to vote, and to extend the mandatory high school civics class to learning about party politics so they have the basics and the learning curve isn't so steep when they vote for the first time.

Discussion Question 3: How do you feel about online voting? How do you feel about mandatory voting?

Response: The group unanimously felt that mandatory voting is not appropriate because it may lead to more uninformed votes. Online voting was met with much skepticism that it could be done as securely as needed. This is likely the way of the future but **any online system must be backed up by a paper trail** so that an audit can be done if something goes wrong.

Discussion Question 4: What do you think could be done to help more Canadians feel more interested and involved in democracy? Do you consider Canada's current electoral system to be "fair"? "Inclusive"? "Representative"? Why or why not?

Response: **The current electoral system is not fair nor representative** because many votes are wasted. In order to get people more involved in democracy, implement a fairer, more representative voting system. In addition to the extension of the mandatory high school civics class, there could be an education program for seniors on the voting system so they understand it completely.