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THE CASE FOR INTERNET VOTING:

IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME

[Ottawa – October 23, 2016] The most ubiquitous transformation of our society has been the digital revolution. Whether this has had a net beneficial impact on standard of living or democratic health is unclear. It is the case that this third industrial revolution has occurred contemporaneously to a period of economic stagnation and a declining trust in government and democracy. What is clear is that the internet is the new universal mass media and that nearly everyone is online daily. Increasingly we do our shopping online, we bank online, and we access entertainment and news online. Which leaves the glaring question of why we don't do our voting online?

In an era of WikiLeaks and pervasive hacking, there are legitimate concerns about privacy and security. There are also legitimate concerns with some issues around a paper ballot. If we can make financial transactions secure, surely the advent of block chain and related technology will render online voting as safe as the veteran polling station model.

We aren't here to debate that question. We are here to say that the introduction of an online voting system would have an extremely positive impact on the health of democracy. We also contend that there is zero question as to whether this will happen in the future; the bricks and mortar polling station has roughly the same shelf life as whips and buggies did at the outset of the 20th century.

Consider the following chart:

Popularity of online voting

Q. If Elections Canada offered a safe way of voting online - that is, on the internet - how likely is it that you would vote online in the next federal election?

October 2016



BASE: Canadians (online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=1,622, MOE +/- 2.4%, 19 times out of 20

December 2015



BASE: Canadians (online only); December 7-10, 2015, n=1,811, MOE +/- 2.3%, 19 times out of 20

December 2009



BASE: Canadians; December 9-15, 2015 (n=3,300), MOE +/- 1.7%, 19 times out of 20

□ DK/NR/NA ■ Not at all likely ■ Not very likely ■ Somewhat likely ■ Very likely

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If we built an online voting system, it would almost certainly immediately be the most popular means of voting. By an increasing margin, the clear majority of Canadians say they would be very likely to use that option. We would predict that if this were to be implemented by the next election, then by the following election, there would be no traditional polling stations. If we think about the controversy about "rigged elections" being raised by Donald Trump, and the frightening idea that his supporters should "monitor" voting booths, we can see a further benefit of voting online.

What is truly remarkable about this growing consensus is the conspicuous absence of fault lines that we would have seen in the past. Older and younger voters are equally enthusiastic. There are no major differences across party support or any other demographic characteristics. This debate does not have the glaring partisan faultiness we see around the debate about moving away from the first-past-the-post-system. It would be a non-controversial and worthwhile reform that would avoid the partisan quagmire plaguing other parts of this debate.

How would the world be better if this were to occur?

First, it would be almost certain that voting rates would rise. The challenge of trudging through inclement weather or waiting in lines would be eliminated. It is undoubtedly the ease of this that would bolster participation rates (more so for those with special access issues) and would eliminate the need for plane tickets for some indigenous communities to vote.

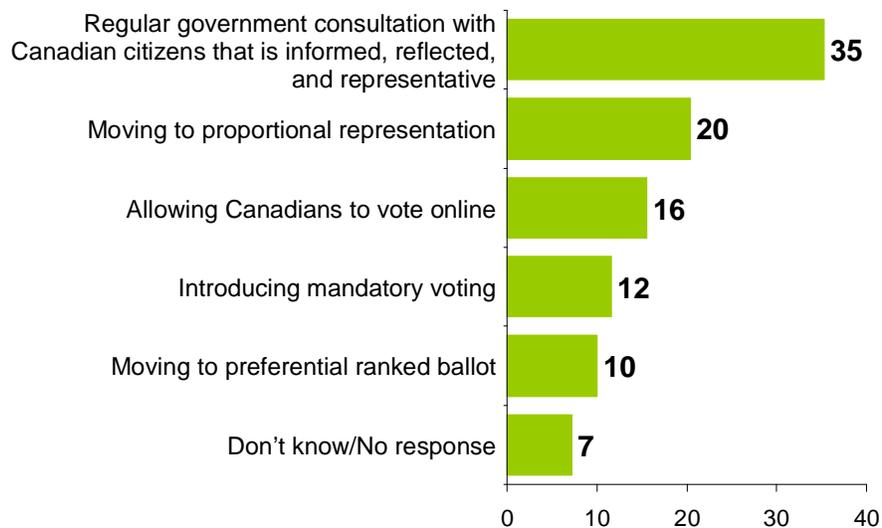
Although there would be significant investments going in, there is little doubt that a digital voting world would cost less to maintain than the current system. The speed and precision of the outcomes would also be enhanced.

Another benefit might be that if digital infrastructure existed it might be used more frequently between elections for plebiscites or referenda. Our evidence suggests the citizenry do not want to simply have a kick at the can every four years.

What is interesting about the debate about electoral reform is that the public don't really see any single solution to the democratic malaise which exists today. Noting that there have been significant improvements in trust and legitimacy these are do not dampen the desire for a better democracy. The public provide a pretty compelling recipe for improving democracy.

Best method for improving democratic health

Q. In your opinion, which of the following would be the best way of improving democratic health in Canada?



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BASE: Canadians (online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=1,622, MOE +/- 2.4%, 19 times out of 20

Putting aside the surprising finding that routine citizen engagement would be seen as the best step forward, the recipe would also include proportional representation and voting online (and quite possibly mandatory voting). The case for online voting is stronger amongst younger voters (who have been voting less than in the past).

Within the current debate about democratic renewal there is no doubt that we should be providing an online ballot sooner rather than later.

Detailed Tables:

Popularity of Online Voting								
<i>Q. If Elections Canada offered a safe way of voting online – that is, on the internet – how likely is it that you would vote online in the next federal election?</i>								
	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Somewh at likely	Very likely	Do not use the Internet	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	12.0%	7.9%	20.4%	57.0%	0.6%	2.1%	1622	2.4
REGION								
British Columbia	15.5%	7.9%	17.1%	57.7%	0.8%	1.0%	232	6.4
Alberta	12.5%	6.1%	20.9%	58.1%	0.0%	2.4%	182	7.3
Saskatchewan*	6.5%	11.2%	28.4%	51.8%	0.0%	2.2%	48	14.1
Manitoba*	13.7%	8.8%	23.9%	50.5%	0.0%	3.0%	76	11.2
Ontario	12.1%	8.1%	21.0%	55.5%	0.7%	2.6%	607	4.0
Quebec	10.1%	9.2%	18.6%	59.8%	0.3%	2.1%	383	5.0
Atlantic Canada	11.2%	3.8%	23.1%	58.0%	2.8%	1.1%	88	10.5
GENDER								
Male	12.9%	9.0%	19.0%	55.9%	1.1%	2.1%	841	3.4
Female	11.0%	7.0%	21.7%	58.1%	0.1%	2.1%	774	3.5
AGE								
<35	7.6%	4.9%	22.5%	60.3%	0.5%	4.1%	295	5.7
35-49	15.2%	10.6%	20.6%	51.4%	1.4%	0.9%	279	5.9
50-64	11.9%	8.4%	16.3%	61.6%	0.0%	1.9%	575	4.1
65+	12.4%	8.4%	24.3%	54.0%	0.5%	0.5%	410	4.8
EDUCATION								
High school or less	14.7%	6.0%	24.2%	50.4%	0.9%	3.9%	294	5.7
College or CEGEP	10.7%	8.3%	21.8%	57.3%	0.7%	1.2%	607	4.0
University or higher	10.5%	9.3%	16.4%	62.0%	0.2%	1.6%	698	3.7
CURRENT VOTE INTENTION								
Liberal Party	7.9%	6.0%	18.5%	65.7%	0.7%	1.2%	682	3.8
Conservative Party	17.2%	8.1%	21.5%	50.8%	0.7%	1.8%	403	4.9
NDP	11.8%	13.9%	29.3%	44.2%	0.5%	0.2%	202	6.9
Green Party	11.1%	6.7%	11.8%	69.2%	0.0%	1.2%	99	9.9
Bloc Québécois	15.4%	11.9%	24.2%	48.5%	0.0%	0.0%	47	14.3

*Results for Saskatchewan and Manitoba should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample sizes.

Best Method for Improving Democratic Health in Canada

Q. In your opinion, which of the following would be the best way of improving democratic health in Canada?

	Moving to prop. Rep.	Moving to pref. ranked ballot	Intro. mand. voting	Allowing Cdns to vote online	Regular gov. consult. w/ Cdn citizens	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	20.4%	10.0%	11.6%	15.5%	35.3%	7.2%	1622	2.4
REGION								
British Columbia	20.1%	12.7%	7.6%	16.0%	37.5%	6.1%	232	6.4
Alberta	22.4%	7.6%	10.0%	15.4%	39.5%	5.1%	182	7.3
Saskatchewan*	21.7%	5.0%	2.2%	13.3%	50.4%	7.3%	48	14.1
Manitoba*	17.3%	6.3%	12.0%	11.5%	37.0%	16.0%	76	11.2
Ontario	17.8%	11.5%	11.8%	14.7%	36.3%	7.9%	607	4.0
Quebec	23.5%	9.0%	15.7%	15.5%	29.7%	6.5%	383	5.0
Atlantic Canada	21.8%	8.1%	11.5%	23.3%	30.1%	5.2%	88	10.5
GENDER								
Male	21.7%	14.2%	11.8%	12.9%	32.5%	6.8%	841	3.4
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50-64	19.4%	10.8%	11.4%	14.5%	38.0%	5.9%	575	4.1
65+	18.6%	6.3%	11.4%	15.5%	41.4%	6.9%	410	4.8
EDUCATION								
High school or less	11.8%	7.6%	14.0%	20.1%	38.1%	8.4%	294	5.7
College or CEGEP	23.3%	8.0%	14.1%	13.4%	34.1%	7.1%	607	4.0
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CURRENT VOTE INTENTION								
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Conservative Party	10.3%	5.2%	15.4%	14.3%	45.9%	8.9%	403	4.9
NDP	41.6%	9.2%	5.9%	11.2%	27.8%	4.3%	202	6.9
Green Party	35.0%	15.3%	6.9%	11.4%	22.7%	8.7%	99	9.9
Bloc Québécois	26.4%	10.8%	14.5%	12.2%	29.0%	7.1%	47	14.3

*Results for Saskatchewan and Manitoba should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample sizes.

Methodology:

This survey was conducted using EKOS' unique, hybrid online/telephone research panel, *Prob/t*. Our panel offers exhaustive coverage of the Canadian population (i.e., Internet, phone, cell phone), random recruitment (in other words, participants are recruited randomly, they do not opt themselves into our panel), and equal probability sampling. All respondents to our panel are recruited by telephone using random digit dialling and are confirmed by live interviewers. Unlike opt-in online panels, *Prob/t* supports margin of error estimates. We believe this to be the only probability-based online panel in Canada

While panellists are randomly recruited, this survey was conducted **online only**, meaning that it excludes the roughly one in six Canadians who either can not or will not respond to surveys online. Results should therefore be considered representative of Canada's online population. The field dates for this survey are October 12-18, 2016. In total, a random sample of 1,622 Canadian adults aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/- 2.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted by **age, gender, region, and educational attainment** to ensure the sample's composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.