

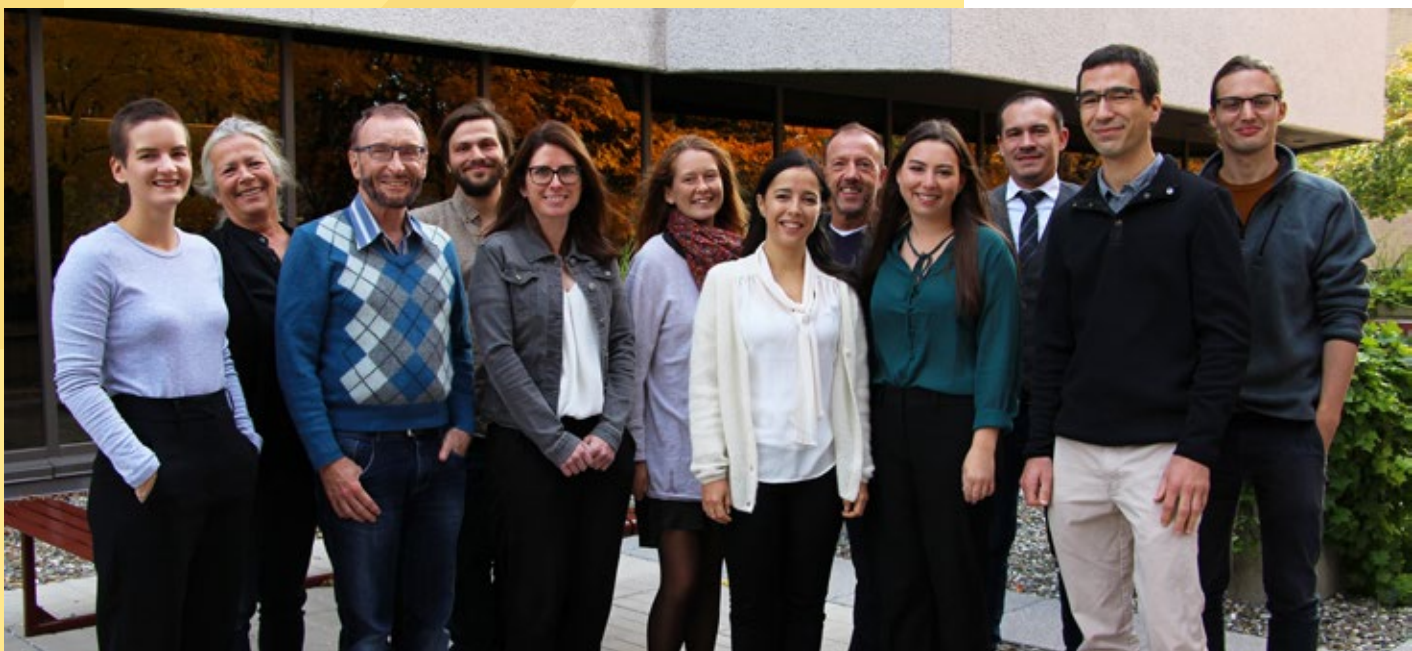
Citizen  
round table

REPORT  
ON THE  
**2017**  
**2019**  
MANDATE

Summary of the work  
and recommendations  
of the members



# THE 12 MEMBERS OF THE CITIZEN ROUND TABLE – 2017-2019



**From left to right:** Sabrina Vigneux (Montréal), Joane Marois (Laurentides), Brian Smith (Montréal), Isaïe-Nicolas Dubois-Sénéchal (Estrie), Natalie Rouleau (Côte-Nord), Marie-Hélène Lyonnais (Montréal), Alexandra Armijo-Fortin (Montréal), Denis Lagacé (Bas-Saint-Laurent), Frédérique Alain-Boucher (Montréal), Merlin Voghel (Abitibi-Témiscamingue), Jean-Gabriel Hasbani (Outaouais) and Adam Samson (Montréal).

## Citizen round table

The Citizen round table is a space for reflection and discussion created by Élections Québec in 2017. It is made up of 12 Québec electors from different backgrounds. The members provide us with their opinions on different aspects of the Québec electoral system with the public interest in mind and in an impartial and non-partisan manner. The members of the Table act as intermediaries between Québec electors and Élections Québec, allowing us to learn more about their expectations and needs.

The work of the Table is based on deliberations. Before each meeting, members receive documents providing neutral information on the topics to be considered at the meeting. During the meeting, members discuss, deliberate and make recommendations to Élections Québec.



## 2017-2019 Report

This report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Citizen round table during their 2017-2019 mandate and gives a list of the topics discussed at the six meetings held from November 2017 to November 2019 (Appendix 1). The report also presents the members' recommendations for improving the Québec electoral system.

In the course of their work, the members of the Citizen round table put forth a range of proposals and solutions for certain services offered and documents produced by Élections Québec. To find out more, see the [minutes](#) for each of the meetings, available in abridged and unabridged (in French only) versions.



## Main recommendations of the Citizen round table

Among all of the recommendations put forward in this mandate, the members determined, further to individual reflection, which ones would be the most important to implement in the short and medium term. Four main recommendations came out of this exercise.

### Introducing a civic education class from the third year of secondary school

The members unanimously agreed to recommend introducing a civic education class at the secondary school level. So that all students can benefit from the class, it should be offered from Secondary III, before students reach the age where school is no longer mandatory. The class would allow future electors to be initiated to voting and democratic life, better understand current political issues and develop their critical thinking.

### Overseeing political party practices in regard to the protection of personal data

The members of the Citizen round table unanimously recommended that political parties be better overseen to ensure protection of the personal information about electors in their possession. The members recommend:

- Making provision of the list of electors conditional on the publication by the parties of a personal information protection policy.
- That all persons using this information be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- That electors have the right to consult the information political parties have about them and to ask that the information be changed or deleted.
- That the time limit for keeping personal information be prescribed in law so that electors' personal information would be deleted upon the expiry of this period.
- That there be consequences reinforcing these requirements in the case of non-compliance.
- That an authority be empowered to investigate such cases and impose sanctions.

Moreover, the members would like to reduce the frequency at which Élections Québec conveys the lists of electors to parties, elected representatives and candidates. Currently, outside the election period, provincial political parties and authorized independent MNAs can obtain the list of electors three times a year.

In addition, the members believe that Élections Québec should no longer indicate the gender and the date of birth of electors on the lists it sends out. They also would like to see Élections Québec no longer convey to political parties and candidates the information regarding electors registered to vote outside Québec, to vote at home or to vote in a residential facility.

## Computerizing the list of electors in polling places in order to offer more flexibility to electors

To improve the voting experience, the members of the Citizen round table recommend using a computerized list of electors in polling places throughout the province. Along with the implementation of such a list, the members recommend putting other measures in place:

- Allowing electors to vote in any polling place in Québec.
- Reconfiguring polling places so that electors can vote based on their order of arrival, rather than based on the volume of electors at a particular polling station.
- Allowing electors to register or make changes to their registration on the list of electors during the advance poll and on election day.

The members believe that these changes would provide more flexibility to electors while ensuring the integrity of the vote. Because electors who have already voted would be marked in real time on the list of electors, it would be impossible for a person to vote more than once.

## Lowering the voting age to 16

The members of the Citizen round table were almost unanimous on this recommendation. The proposing members think the voting age should be 16, provided a civic education class is offered from Secondary III.

In this way, before voting for the first time, youth age 16 and 17 would know the basic aspects of citizenship, the electoral system, how to vote and how to get informed to be able to make an enlightened choice, among other things. The purpose of this measure is, above all, to have elections reflect the widest range possible of opinions.

## Aspects to improve for the 2022 general election in the opinion of the members of the Citizen round table

The members also took stock of the general election of October 18, 2018 in their capacity as electors.

They determined three priority areas for improvement for the next general election.

They recommended:

- Improving the recruitment and training of election officers to increase their level of competency.
- Verifying the reliability of the computerized systems used for voting in educational institutions and the offices of the returning officers.
- That Élections Québec disseminate information for the electors on the platforms of the political parties and candidates.

During the 2018 general election, the members had the opportunity to visit the office of the returning officer in their electoral divisions in order to better understand that person's role and the challenges involved in the holding of an election.

## Other recommendations by the Citizen round table

### Information for electors

- Offering electors an impartial online platform with information about the programs of the political parties and candidates.
- Conveying a minimum of information about candidates to electors in one of the postal mailings stipulated under the *Election Act*.

### Voting and registration on the list of electors

- Simplifying registration for some voting methods.
- Widening access to some voting methods for more electors.
- Extending voting hours on election day.
- Making it possible to register or change one's registration on the list of electors online.

## Election officers

- Giving officers in charge of information and order a supervisory role vis-à-vis the election officers.
- Allowing future electors age 16 and 17 to work on elections.

## Methods for promoting diversity among elected representatives

- Fostering the development of training, coaching and mentorship programs to promote more female candidates and candidates from diverse backgrounds.

## Publishing of results by polling subdivision

- No longer publishing election results by polling subdivision with as much detail as at present and increasing the number of electors in each subdivision to ensure the confidentiality of the vote.

## Other means of encouraging voter turnout

- Recognizing blank ballots and including these in the calculation of election results.
- Offering a symbolic voting incentive, for example, a sticker saying “I voted!”

## Online voting

- Not implementing online voting. If, however, it must be done, exercising great caution and adopting a very gradual approach.
- Conducting studies on online voting and asking electors for their opinion in a survey. As needed, doing a pilot project with a limited group, measuring their level of satisfaction and reporting publicly on the project.
- Continuing to offer paper-based voting to electors.

# APPENDIX 1

## Meetings and subjects discussed

### MEETING 1 | November 10, 2017

- Evaluation of the various aspects of the elector experience of the members and identification of areas for improvement.

### MEETING 2 | February 9, 2018

- Determination of the best solutions for improving areas identified in the previous meeting, especially in regard to access to voting, the voting experience and information for electors.

### MEETING 3 | June 8, 2018

- Deliberation on online voting as a way to improve voting access.
- Evaluation of elector information tools for the 2018 general election.
- Issues relating to the publication of results by polling subdivision.
- Exploration of factors influencing voter turnout and brainstorming ways of promoting it.

### MEETING 4 | November 16, 2018

- Taking stock of the elector experience of the members in the 2018 general election.
- Discussion about political parties and the protection of electors' personal information.
- Deliberations on certain solutions put forward at the previous meeting to promote election participation: recognizing blank ballots, lowering the voting age, offering an incentive to vote and making voting mandatory.

### MEETING 5 | March 15, 2019

- Discussion on the instruments of direct democracy (topic chosen by the members).
- Discussion about the imposition of quotas to foster diversity among elected representatives.
- Evaluation of methods provided for communicating with Élections Québec.

### MEETING 6 | October 11, 2019

- Review of the first mandate.
- Solutions for the challenge of recruiting election officers: brainstorming and improvements to the "Recruiting" section of the website.