Making Democracy Accessible: Making Canadian Political Processes More Inclusive

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The notion of being a Canadian citizen means different things to different Canadians, but one thing that can be agreed upon is that being able to participate in elections and being able to shape the political processes within Canadian society is a part of being a Canadian citizen. In order to invoke change, individuals must vote for the leader they deem as the best for leading Canadian society and one will create public policy that reaps the most benefits. Individuals can further shape how Canada is run by lobbying politicians, asking politicians to support policies that will positively impact society, and also running for positions in office. All of these allow for individuals to feel a part of Canadian society. The majority of Canadians are able to do so.

However, 6.2 million Canadian citizens who identify as disabled are often ignored in public-policy making decisions (Morris et al, 2018). Furthermore, Canadians with disabilities continue to face barriers to exercise their democratic rights. Specifically, Canadians with disabilities face barriers in being able to vote (Prince, 2009). Barriers to accessibility prevent individuals with disabilities from voting. Furthermore, individuals with disabilities are ignored by politicians and candidates (Prince, 2009). Currently, individuals with disabilities remain a marginalized group in society and by not being able to vote or influence public-policy, individuals with disabilities cannot make changes to improve their lives.

Canada has come a long way in making political processes more accessible. This is evidenced by the recent additions of accessible voting measures enacted in 2015 (McQuigge, 2015). However, being able to participate in Canadian democracy remains a challenge for disabled individuals. Despite reforms to make elections accessible, various elections, such as provincial elections continue to lack accessible polling stations (Browne, 2020). Furthermore, individuals with disabilities continue to be ignored by political parties and groups (Levesque, 2016). This leads to individuals with disabilities being unable to make necessary changes in

public policy. Overall, a democratic deficit exists amongst Canadians with disabilities. The lack of participation of individuals with disabilities presents itself as systemic barrier.

Thus, my research aims to address this democratic deficit and offer recommendations for solving this issue. This deficit is evidenced by the deficiency of accessibility within Canadian elections, the lack of recognition by politicians at the federal and provincial levels, and barriers to participating in the electoral process and policy-making. The key recommendations that will be addressed in this research include: enacting universal legislation throughout Canada that promotes inclusivity in political processes, implementing electronic voting, and increasing the use of mail-in voting. The overall goal of this research is to raise attention on the democratic deficit that individuals with disabilities are facing. By raising attention to this issue, various systemic barriers to political participation can be addressed and democracy can become accessible for all Canadians. In all, my research aims to make Canadian society more accessible.

Research Methods

The research methods employed in this paper will include conducting a literature review and extracting key information from scholarly articles in relevant fields. It is important to note that there is little research done on the democratic deficit exhibited amongst Canadians with disabilities (Levesque, 2016). Thus, this research seeks to build and expand on existing scholarly articles and research related to the democratic deficit experienced by individuals with disabilities. This research will also employ a comparative analysis by examining reforms and policies other nations including the UK, Australia, Estonia, etc. have used to make their political processes more inclusive and accessible for individuals with disabilities.

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