

MPs should consider online voting during COVID-19 pandemic, says researcher

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Online voting is entirely possible in parliamentary settings, according to Brock University Assistant Professor of Political Science Nicole Goodman.

Goodman and her research partner, Aleksander Essex, Associate Professor of Software Engineering at Western University, recently wrote in [*Policy Options*](#) that "even institutions steeped in tradition must consider technology" and asserted that "a secure, remote voting solution for online voting is viable."

On April 1, The Hill Times reported that while some members of parliament (MPs) believe that the country is lagging in this area and due for reform, as evidenced by the difficulties created by the current COVID-19 crisis, other MPs are reluctant to entertain the possibility of changing procedures and would not consider debating the topic unless the suspension of parliament is required to last into the fall.

Goodman and Essex contend that while the European Union's recent decision to move to email voting is not without its problems, a more thoughtful and permanent solution is available to members of Canadian parliament for three reasons:

- Parliamentary votes are part of the public record, and therefore easily verified.
- The cybersecurity infrastructure needed to protect electronic information is readily available.
- With specific training, MPs can ensure that their own votes are correctly recorded.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has placed limits on legislative democracy to ensure the safety of MPs, but technology can provide a solution that will allow MPs to continue to [vote](#) on bills and also promote enhanced representation of members in votes," says Goodman.

While online voting doesn't need to happen all the time, and it doesn't replace [parliamentary debate](#), she says "it is a [solution](#) to the current situation wherein MPs can continue to social distance at their homes while passing necessary emergency measures."

Findings from Goodman's research have been presented in testimony to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly (Ontario) and the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. She is a member of the advisory board of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the director of the Centre for e-Democracy.

Provided by Brock University

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