

Do we need a new voting system?

I will take a social justice and environmental view in my letter. My hope is for a kinder, gentler society supportive of everyone in it. There would be far less inequality and much more acceptance of differences. If we look after each other we will all have more energy to make the changes that are desperately needed to deal with our biggest threat ever - global climate change. This may sound naive but it is possible, it has to be! Proportional Representation could help bring about the society I am hoping for.

Currently, our First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system rewards those with the most money and concentrated regional support and the best organizing and advertising. The insecurity caused by national and global issues and the sense of the individual citizen that they are not being heard has resulted in very polarized politics with a great deal of anger that discourages any respectful dialogue.

What is the purpose of elections? Elected politicians are to be the voice of the population that votes. However, with First Past the Post, our current system, the party with the most votes gets the seat. Given that we have more than two parties the losing parties can split the vote. This can result in a party being elected with less than the majority of votes. As a result many voters nationally will not be represented in Parliament; their vote didn't count. This can lead to disillusionment and possible abstention from voting. People will look elsewhere to get their issues addressed as we lose trust in our institutions and sometimes methods chosen can be very harmful. The ridicule and personal attacks on politicians and others with differing opinions is demeaning and silencing. The word Democracy comes from the Greek, demos for people and kratos for rule. Frankly, with the current system it is hard to see how the people are truly being served as climate change and inequality march on, unrelenting.

Proportional Representation (PR) comes in various forms that are used in many countries worldwide with significant success. With a PR system every vote counts. It is not without issues and difficulties but overall provides support for communities and leads to more equal and engaged societies. My hope for PR is that we will start listening, respectfully, to each other, find compromises and guide our country with our votes.

Since there will undoubtedly be many misgivings about such a significant change I would recommend a trial of at least two Territorial elections. This would allow us to see how a PR system would work. We are familiar with the current method of voting and may need practice to work out any issues that may arise. They always do! This is a long process but we will have a much better result if we take our time. Our Citizens' Assembly is working hard to prepare their report due at the end of October, 2024. As citizens we need to inform ourselves on PR in preparation for their recommendations. The resources below provide background information.

We have a singular opportunity to make a real change for our Territory that can serve as an example of what is possible when we work together.

Resources:

Yukon Citizens Assembly - <https://www.yukoncitizensassembly.ca>

Fair Vote Yukon - <https://fairvoteyukon.ca>

Fair Vote Canada - <https://www.fairvote.ca>

Democracy May Not Exist, but We'll Miss it When it's Gone.

The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart. Books by Astra Taylor

Thank you for reading.

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