

Submission to the Electoral Reform Committee  
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**Alternative Voting Systems:** The purpose of my vote is to elect a person to represent the interests of my constituency. It is my understanding that our constitution does not oblige us to elect a political party. However, political parties have inserted themselves into the process in such a way that it feels like there is no other choice.

My feeling is that this review process is biased towards moving us even further away from the purpose laid out in the constitution, and moving us more towards a system that favours political parties over individual voters.

How can proportional representation, with political parties choosing the representatives from a roster of candidates, be consistent with electing an individual to represent the interests of a constituency? Political parties are defined by a single set of interests (the party's view) for the various issues, yet there are hundreds of constituencies. So, how can one set of party interests be consistent with the interests of hundreds of constituencies? Under this system, how can a voter know who is representing his/her interest? MP's would not be attached to a particular constituency. Even if he/her were, it would be after the fact and how would we know if this individual would properly represent our constituency's interests.

Proportional representation, with some sort of approval of candidates, is less egregious, but is no less of a move away from an individual who represents a constituency's interests. Notwithstanding the approval element of this alternative, an individual selected under this system would not be representing a specific constituency.

The disadvantages outlined in the Background Paper for the FPTP system are essentially, in my view, disadvantages for political parties. Rather than changing the voting system, I firmly believe that the way to address these issues would be to make political parties illegal. Eliminating the existence of political parties would mean that all MP's would be sitting as independents and the FPTP would function as originally intended.

The alternatives of two-round voting and ranked ballots are once again advantageous to political parties, but in theory could produce better results. My concern would be that many people would now see this as a significant increase in effort that people may not be willing to undertake. If the public perception is that the process belongs to political parties rather than individuals, the question would remain: why bother? While split votes in a given constituency could still occur with the elimination of political parties, it would be much less likely to be a nation-wide phenomenon.

Another very important issue for voters these days is the feeling that they need to engage in strategic voting. Given the manner in which political parties have inserted themselves into the process, I, and

many others around me, no longer feel that we can simply choose the best person to represent our constituency's interests. When making the final choice, we often feel the need to consider political party policies, the party's leader, and the party's track record. The result of this process could be the selection of someone different than one might have otherwise if political parties did not exist. The elimination of political parties would obviously also address this issue.

But some people might say that this would be a bad idea because we would be losing out on all the benefits that political parties provide to the system. I would ask such people to please point out what those benefits might be. The fact that your representative is often forced to vote as the party deems appropriate, which may or may not be in line with your constituency's interests. That in the event a political party has a majority of the seats and your representative is not in that party, your representative's voice in parliament no longer exists. Even if your representative is a member of the majority is his voice equal to that of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet? Or perhaps it is the ability of a political party to parachute an individual unknown to a constituency in to represent that constituency's interests. These are just a few items that come to mind. When I undertake this review, I seem to find many more cons, than pros, for value added to the process by political parties, as do most people I talk to about this.

The government of the NWT has been run without political parties for some time, consequently they would not have experienced most of the disadvantages outlined in the Background Paper. I am surprised that there was nothing in the Background Paper about how their system has functioned since then.

The elimination of political parties would also address many of the other issues that currently dog our political system.

**Online voting:** I am in favour of online voting.

**Mandatory Voting:** I am not in favour of mandatory voting, mainly for the reasons outlined in the Background Paper. In particular, it would concern me that forcing people to vote would not necessarily produce better results than a "low voter turnout" election, as people who are forced to vote, rather than wanting to vote, do not necessarily make informed decisions.

I believe that better results are generally achieved through rewarding and/or incentivizing people, rather than punishing people, as is contemplated in mandatory voting.

Based on my observations, I would suggest that low voter turnout is a reaction to political party behaviour, performance, and track record. They are often viewed as being focused on the party's interests, as opposed to those of the constituency that the MP represents. I would argue that the elimination of political parties might just regenerate voter interest in the political process and increase voter turnout for elections.

**Voting Age:** I am not in favour of lowering the voting age. There seems to be a consensus in the scientific community that the human brain matures sometime in the 20's. So, while one can vote at the age of 18, the human brain has not yet fully matured. Even if you believe it is a good idea to instill good democratic habits in people at an early age, I would submit that we are already doing that with the voting age at 18. So, 18 is already low enough.