

Submission from the Council of Canadians Thunder Bay Chapter to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform.

Our present electoral system commonly referred to as first past the post (FPTP) no longer serves our electoral needs as a 21st century democracy. This FPTP system is archaic and only truly legitimate in a two party electoral environment not in our present multi party political arena.

Because of this old system we now all too often have majority governments in the House of Commons which are elected to these majorities with a minority of votes. Our present and former governments were elected to majority with 39% of the vote. These false majorities undermine the integrity of our voting system and call into question the very legitimacy of how we govern our country. We have widespread cynicism about the value of even voting to the point that we have a large segment of the population who no longer vote. They see their vote as a waste and of no importance.

Electoral reform is clearly wanted and needed. All of the major political parties with the exception of the Conservative Party have publicly recognized that the FPTP system needs to be consigned to history. The time has come to adopt a more democratic and credible voting system which will deliver a House of Commons more reflective of the voting choices of all Canadians. We need a new election process which is seen to be legitimate and valuable to all voters and not just the “winning” minority of voters.

The majority of our fellow democratic countries such as Australia and New Zealand which rely on voting and elections as the cornerstone of their democracies have adopted some type of Proportional Representation (PR) as the method of electing their legislatures and governments. Proportional Representation delivers a fair and equitable voting option which allows all voters to know their vote counts and has impact. Proportional Representation gives every vote meaning and value. There is no wasted vote!

The basic principle of PR is that every political party will have a number of seats in the House of Commons proportional to their vote count from the election. If party A gets 20% of the vote they get 20% of the the seats in the House. It would be fair that a party would need to meet a reasonable vote count threshold to be entitled to having a presence in the House.

Moving to a proportional representation system of voting would change the character of how politics is carried out. It would be difficult for any party to attain a pure majority of votes and so the arts of compromise, listening and cooperation would need to be the norm and not the present chronic confrontational style of politics we are fed up with.

We support the work and analysis put forward by Fair Vote Canada in their document “Submission to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform”. (www.fairvote.ca/fvc-submission-to-erre/). We share their view that adopting a proportional representation system is the best way forward to reinvigorate and enhance our electoral system.

Submitted by: Barry Beaupre

