

Electoral Reform Solution by Aimee Cameron--Prince Edward Island.

Good Afternoon Council,

I believe there is a very simple, straight-forward and logical change we could make to our current first-past-the-post electoral system that would solve our current electoral problems.

Under our current system, the individual who becomes Premier or Prime Minister is determined by which party has the most elected representatives at the local level. If Liberals get the most seats then the *leader* of the Liberals gets to be Premier/Prime Minister. The people therefore do not actually get to choose *directly* who becomes Premier/Prime Minister. Canadians are forced to vote for the local representative of their favored leader's party (whether they want to vote for that individual or not) to ensure that their preferred leader becomes Prime Minister/ Premier. This results in strategic vote casting to prevent an unfavorable candidate of a larger party from being elected rather than voting for the local representative who has the right skills for the job. Voting in our first-past-the-post system is leader driven from the top down. As a result we are missing out on electing some very capable individuals at the local level who are members of the smaller parties or independent.

The goal is to be able to identify and elect key individuals from our society who possess the leadership skills necessary to perform their job as a representative of the people regardless of which political party they belong to. Partisan politics is becoming a thing of the past. Canadians want politicians to implement the wishes of the people, not the mandates of their party. We want competent, intelligent leaders who collaborate and cooperate with each other across all parties. Diversity in government should reflect the diversity of the country. We all need to work together.

My solution is that we cast two **PREFERENTIAL** votes on our ballot. Our first ranked vote is for the local representative in our riding. Our second vote is for the current leader of the party that we believe is most capable of performing the job of Premier/Prime Minister. If people are able to vote directly for the Premier/Prime Minister there is no need to use defensive voting tactics. Having the option of a ranked ballot does not *require* voters to rank all their preferences (1,2,3,4, etc.), it just offers them the *option* to rank as few or as many choices they like. This will eliminate the fear of vote splitting which occurs when right-wing votes go to Conservatives and left-wing votes are split between NDP, Green, Liberals, and Independents. Having a ranked ballot allows your second and third choices to be used in the case where no clear winner gets a majority. Offering a ranked ballot is the only way of collecting the most accurate voter data from

Canadians. Analysts will be able to see whether or not a vote for the Liberals was someone's first choice, or if it was a defensive vote cast against the Conservatives. We will more accurately see the true numbers of Canadians who support NDP, GREENS, and INDEPENDENTS as their first choice versus Liberals and Conservatives. You cannot discern the motive behind a single "X" marked next to a name but you can collect the most accurate voting data when people have the option to rank their preferences. With preferential ballots every vote counts. This will increase voter engagement and more people will show up on Election Day.

The perfect example where this new two ranked-ballot system would have had a very positive effect was on the outcome of the 2015 Provincial Election on Prince Edward Island. The difference between several of the smaller party members not being elected was shockingly, and disappointingly close. Every vote *did* matter in our last three municipal, provincial, and federal elections held over 2014 and 2015 on Prince Edward Island. Candidates won and lost by such small margins that a preferential ballot would have elected some amazing individuals from smaller parties who lost due to defensive voting strategies. What is worse is that after our Provincial Leader's debate it was clear beyond any shadow that the individual who was most capable of being Premier of our Province was the leader of the Green Party, Peter Bevan Baker. There is no voting system I am aware of where Peter can become premier unless the Green Party sweeps the majority of the seats at the local level. This will *never* happen in the short term and there is no other way to elect this man into the Premier's position *unless* Islanders are able to cast two separate votes. One for their local representative as well as one vote for the leader they support. There are capable individuals across all parties, across all provinces and territories and we want to make sure they get elected and get working together.

My final example of the top-down leader-driven election results comes from the May 2, 2011 federal election in Quebec. I was living in Montreal at the time when the NDP swept the Province. It was an exciting time as Jack Layton was inspiring Canadians to get involved again. There was renewed hope that change was possible, that politics could be cooperative and engaging under Jack's leadership. People were not voting specifically for their local NDP representative. Some local NDP reps were actually unknown to their constituents and some reps had never even visited their perspective ridings before the election. The residents of Quebec were using their local vote to support Jack, the leader. I am thankful that Jack received such support, he was an amazing man, but I am also sure that there were many local ridings in Quebec who missed out on some very capable individuals being elected because the election results were leader-driven. Had Quebec residents been able to have two votes, one for Jack and one for a local rep of their choice the outcome of the 2011 election would have been more well rounded, inclusive, and representative of the diversity of the province. There would also be some very capable individuals in Ottawa right now rather than some of the childishness of certain individuals we have been witness to lately.

Partisan politics is becoming a thing of the past. Canadians want politicians to implement the wishes of the people, not the mandates of their party's secret corporate agenda. We want competent, intelligent leaders who collaborate and cooperate with each other across all parties. We want responsible action and accountability. Diversity in government should reflect the diversity of the country. We all need to work together.

It is *imperative* that after your coast-to-coast brainstorming sessions and idea gathering from Canadians that your council make a final decision to move forward with implementing a new voting system. Please do not wait for a referendum. Delayed action causes frustration among citizens as well as wasting time and our hard earned money. Canadians voted for change during the last election. We have empowered you to make an informed, educated decision on our behalf. Let's try something new, we can always adjust it again down the road and make it better, but we have to start somewhere and we have to start now.

Thank you so much council for your work on this matter, I hope you will put my recommendations to good use for all of Canada.

Kindest regards,

Aimee Cameron

Prince Edward Island