

My name is Kristina Calhoun, and I have been involved with both the federal and territorial Green parties here in Yukon. The Green Party is the federal party that perhaps has been impacted the most by strategic voting in the federal election of 2015. Locally, our vote percentage went from 19% in 2011 to 3%, and we were told by many of our supporters that they felt that they had to vote strategically to wrest control away from the previous government. Some people are saying that Greens across Canada would benefit the most from the move to some form of Proportional Representation (PR). This may be true at present, and certainly would have been true during the election last October; most common forms of PR would have awarded the Green Party of Canada more seats than one! However, I think its clear that the New Democratic Party would have benefited just as well from pretty well any form of PR, and certainly in given circumstances the Liberals & Conservatives would benefit from PR (please reference the Canadian federal election of 1993, in which the Progressive Conservative party received only two seats despite a 16% popular vote across Canada. The Bloc Quebecois, by the way, had 13.5% of the vote, and garnered Official Opposition status with 54 seats).

The numbers speak for themselves: single member plurality, or First Past the Post (FPTP), does not result in very fair election results, especially in current times where more than two political parties run for office. I think that anyone who says that FPTP is the best electoral system for Canada is ignoring a large body of evidence that says otherwise.

Canadas current First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system results in a monopoly in decision making powers in a rapidly-changing global environment where adaptability will be key for successful governance. Really, why should we continue to use a system in which a government chosen with 35% of the popular vote could possibly govern, without checks or balances, a citizenry that basically rejected the policies of this

majority government? FPTP also can result in huge policy swings. Do we really want social, economic and environmental policies to change radically at the whim of the latest government?

A by-product of using the FPTP system is the trend of decreasing voter turnout. With many voters turned off by a feeling of disempowerment and others just seeing no reason to become engaged, fewer citizens are voting. I don't see how anyone can see this as a positive situation.

The winner-take-all scenario that arises from FPTP voting is an illustration of what not to do in political science surveys. Thanks to the work of Arend Lijphart, Salomon Orellana, Dennis Pilon and others, we have social science studies that illustrate that proportional systems outperform FPTP systems in a number of key ways.

By trying to making every vote count and allowing for a wider range of views to be represented in parliament, PR empowers ordinary citizens. This can be expected to have an impact on inequality and access to social services over time and could determine how a country deals with diversity more generally. This point provides the central argument in a recent book by Salomon Orellana (2014). The following information comes from Fair Vote Canada's website: Orellana argues that increased opportunities for diversity and dissent allows PR countries to outperform in four areas:

- 1 policy innovation (one example is how quickly the public accepts and the government can act on new and innovative ideas)
- 2 mitigating the pandering of politicians in the pursuit of voters by promising quick-fix solutions (this point, I think, speaks for itself)

- 3 increasing the political sophistication of the electorate (is this not a laudable goal?)
- 4 limiting elite control over decision making.
- 5 Id like to commend Fair Vote Canada and say to the committee that this organization has done a lot of groundwork in its presentation to the committee and in providing resources to Canadians engaged in electoral reform. Fair Vote Canada suggests three different electoral systems for consideration, and I believe each of these systems, as well as the Preferential Ridings Proportional system suggested by Dave Brekke of Whitehorse, would be a huge improvement over our current system.

Voters in over 90 countries around the world are smart enough to figure out PR systems; Im confident that Canadians can too.