

## The Case for a Referendum

While I have a preferred method for electing our representatives, in itself this shouldn't matter. What does matter is the electoral system preferred by the majority of Canadians. When determining something as central to our democratic foundation as how we vote, Canadians as a whole – not politicians – must be the arbiter. Canadians deserve the time to research and debate the alternatives to our longstanding system and we deserve the respect of the ultimate consultation: a referendum.

Canada should follow the truly democratic process that New Zealand used when it changed its electoral system. That is, the 2019 federal election would include two independent questions: (1) do you want to move from FPTP; and (2) which of four alternatives do you prefer? If, like New Zealanders, a majority of Canadians want to change from FPTP, in 2020 a referendum would be held in which the electorate chooses between FPTP and the preferred alternative (Mixed Member Proportional in the case of New Zealand). Under this scenario, Canadians would have the time to research alternatives, debate their merits and weaknesses, and cast an informed vote focused solely on how our representatives are elected. There would be no confusion regarding whether a vote was in support of some parts of a broad political platform but not others.

The current process to change how we vote is moving much too quickly and too many Canadians are unaware that this is even happening. While some argue that Canadians simply aren't interested, constituency offices and media deserve some scrutiny. While some MPs have actively solicited input from constituents, many have not. My own experience is illustrative: in early summer I met with my MP to discuss electoral reform but my request that she speak with a group of neighbours was denied, as was my request for a list of local events where electoral reform would be discussed over the summer. The one and only newsletter to constituents from my MP provided no information on the electoral reform process that was underway. The local television news station had no stories informing residents of the one townhall, and on the day of the event chose to cover a Beatles tribute band instead. Despite knowing about the townhall two weeks earlier, the local newspaper didn't publish an article until the Friday before the Sunday event, did not include time or registration details, and did not report on the townhall itself. Canadians can be forgiven for being unengaged in a process that is not a priority for the local media and when constituency offices have not made every reasonable effort to actively inform citizens.

The electoral reform process to date has been highly flawed. The only way that a change to how we vote can be deemed legitimate is if the will of Canadians is respected. This can only be achieved through a referendum.

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