

Proportional representation is fair and democratic

To the Editor,

This is one Councillor's opinion on the new proposed municipal voting system: the ranked ballot system. To begin with the new proposed rank ballot system is not, and I repeat not, a form of proportional representation. It could perhaps be best described as a first cousin of our current first-past-the-post system. In fact, it appears that if implemented provincially and federally it will create just as many distortions (false majorities) as our current system. However, if implemented municipally it will cause more headaches than anything else because it is not suited to a non-party system. The change will mean counting and recounting ballots and recounting those ballots again to get to the overall winner, which in the absence of parties and majority status, means an awful lot of counting to have the same voting rights as every other councillor. It's true that ranked ballots ensure that a person must reach a threshold to be elected, usually 50 plus one percent of the votes cast, but you will be forced to vote for and rank candidates that you may not want in office at all. Right now in Bancroft you can vote for one, two, or three candidates if you wish and all votes are counted equally with the top three being elected, but with the new system you will have to vote and rank all candidates even if you do not believe they deserve a vote. Hardly seems fair to have to vote for someone you don't want elected only to see them elected because you were forced to place them as a second or third choice.

Fair Vote Canada points out that the Ranked Ballot System, although giving the illusion of more choice, simply 'recreates most of the problems with our current system' and could perhaps be why only one democracy, Australia, uses this system. For examples of the distortions created by ranked voting go to <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page11118.aspx>. As Fair Vote Canada further points out, 'Adding second and third choice votes in order to create a winner does not magically create 'majority' support that didn't exist before.' Right now a majority of Canadians are 'represented' by their second or third choice, or by a party they would never choose. Ranked voting will ensure that this unfair system continues. Compare the number of countries using ranked voting systems, one, to the democracies using some form of proportional representation, no less than 41 including Germany, Denmark and Finland. Of course detractors will argue that proportional representation causes too many coalition governments that won't be able to effectively govern. That's true, when you have power hungry ideologically motivated parties who choose to not negotiate or compromise, but compromise and negotiation lie at the heart of democracies. One party rule lies at the heart of dictatorships and we have seen the kind of damage that an ideologically driven party can do when an unfair voting system gives them a false majority government. Political columnist Andrew Coyne, points out that the overall change from first-past-the-post to ranked ballot elections is 'small' adding that 'the biggest impact of this change is simply that it is, in fact, a change.' I think Canadian's deserve more than a mere facade change from one unfair voting system to another unfair system. It's time we demanded real change in the form of proportional representation. I urge you to say no to the proposed ranked ballot system, it is no more suited to municipalities than it is suited to the provincial or federal level. Instead, I urge you to demand a real fair and democratic alternative that will ensure that parties will compromise, collaborate, negotiate and most importantly share power. After all we teach our children to share, to compromise, and work together, should we not demand the same from our leaders?

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