

# Revolutionary electoral change will soon be offered to Ontario

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To the Editor:

Jack Evans's recent contribution on Electoral Reform makes me wonder if he wishes to obfuscate the essential differences between Proportional Representation and Representation by Population.

His 40 years of reporting on elections have not prepared him for what is coming. Clearly he has read little to prepare him for the revolutionary change we will soon be offered. After conceding room for criticism of our First-Past-the-Post system, he complains that he can't see how a proportional system would work. Of course not!

That's precisely why we have an Ontario Citizens Assembly: to study the options, and then recommend the best system for Ontario. No easy task! In the 75 democracies that have switched to Proportional systems, there are half a dozen different systems involving some 80 variations.

In sidetracking the reader onto Rep by Pop, Jack fails to focus on the unprecedented opportunity we will soon have to vote for a more democratic system. Here's what FPTP saddles us with:

- i) A ruling party elected by a minority of us, but enjoying all the power;
- ii) A leader with dictatorial power, surrounded by Yesmen, and my MPP, a party hack if he wants any chance of advancement;
- iii) A legislature that in no way represents what we said at the polls;
- iv) voters so apathetic and cynical about the whole process that close to half don't vote at all, and those who do overwhelmingly vote against what they most deplore rather than for what they believe in.

Here's what ANY proportional system offers us:

- i) Every vote counts. I know when I vote that my party will get the percentage of seats that matches its percentage of the vote. So I vote for what I believe in.
- ii) My desire to vote gets a real shot in the arm. My cynicism about politics takes a beating.
- iii) Coalition government replaces phony majorities. It works! With several parties in the Cabinet, real debate on important issues in the legislature takes over from mindless shouting;
- iv) A dramatic rise in voting (Democracies with Prop Rep often average 25 per cent higher voter turnout than we do).

I believe our key problem is that the government wants credit for initiating the referendum, but wants it to fail. After all, how did they get 70 per cent of the seats on 46 per cent of the vote?!

So they have set a 60-per-cent threshold on the vote, and have provided precious little publicity for the Assembly to get its message out. The same game was played in B.C. last year, where the public had to vote in ignorance, with party leaders encouraging the voters to turn it down. Yet the people still voted 57.4 per cent in favour of a Proportional system. Not quite enough! And we call it democracy!

The vast majority I speak to about this have very little, if any, knowledge about the coming referendum. I guess it's up to us to spread the word. Let's demand the Assembly be given the means to explain their choice to us before we vote. Let's expect the politicians to encourage us to turn it down. But let's keep in mind that it may not be my personal favourite, but it's going to be one hell of a lot better than what we have now.

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