

## Why Are We Still Squabbling About Electoral Reform?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, March 08, 2011

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Why are we still squabbling about electoral reform when a majority of Canadians already want it?

Political parties often have several ballots to come up with a leader who has more than 50% support from members/delegates/whoever.

The BC Liberal party just went through a leadership race where party members voted for at least two candidates in preferred order. Their votes were weighted so each of 85 ridings had identical influence.

Next month the BC NDP will have a preferential ballot leadership vote as well.

Then both parties will fight a first-past-the-post provincial election some time in the next 2 years or so.

Absurd.

A plurality of support for a party leader is insufficient. But it is ok for general elections?

This simply has to stop.

Last month the federal NDP introduced a motion to create a House of Commons committee to "engage with Canadians, and make recommendations to the House, on how best to achieve a House of Commons that more accurately reflects the votes of Canadians by combining direct election by electoral district and proportional representation" because we have "a House of Commons that does not accurately reflect the political preferences of Canadians."

The first-past-the-post stopped being really useful around the end of the 19th century once more than two parties starting fielding candidates.

Those who blame non-FPTP systems as being inherently unstable need to see that the earth hasn't stopped spinning for the almost 7 years that Canada has been without a majority government. While some don't like the lack of ease of legislation, I like how parliamentary committees mean something now and that debate and votes suddenly matter like never before in recent memory.

But then again, people wonder if the time isn't yet right for Canada's political culture to accept a change in our electoral system. If only a majority were already interested in a change. If only 62% of Canadians and almost 70% of decided Canadians supported a system of proportional representation. Maybe then I'd really have an argument here. [It turns out that 62% of Canadians already support a PR system.](#) Harper's two proroguesments helped cement that support. And [CuriosityCat has already done the heavy lifting](#) on the poll numbers to show a reasonably likely scenario of how this could play out in the next election.

Democracy is a muscle. We've been exercising it for most of this last decade and we're starting to get good at it. I think we need more practice. And I think parties need to start entrenching progressive, democratic and truly representative electoral systems so our whole democracy gets a boost of efficacy.

Our declining voter turnout certainly indicates the need.

It's time for leaders to act.