

The Future Party Platform

ELECTORAL REFORM

You're gonna hear me roooOoAR oh-oh-oh-OH! -Kary Perry

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Goals

1. A simple cheap upgrade to voting system through ranked-choice
2. Improve all parties' funding through per-vote subsidy
3. Investigate implementation of a more representative system

Overview of the Problem

Currently we have a first-past-the-post electoral system which is simple but tends to ignore overall public sentiment in favour of 2 parties, maybe 3. The end result is a break between what most Canadians want and what the dominant political parties who claim to represent them do. At the same time Canadians increasingly find themselves without a party that they want to be represented by and are instead pressured to vote for "the lesser of two evils" because no one else has a chance.

This situation is no surprise. After all, if a candidate can win 100% of the power even if they don't have majority support simply because the majority has more than one option to choose from, then they don't have to bother appealing to more voters. At the same time, those other voters start strategically voting for someone other than their preferred candidate just so the candidate they don't like doesn't win. This cycle pushes alternative, more desirable parties and independents out of the competition over time.

The end result are elections where voters get disillusioned by the process and either choose the "lesser of two evils" they're apathetic about or give up on voting altogether because their vote "doesn't matter" anyways.

It doesn't have to be this way. Other better systems exist, some are easy to implement modifications that would make a big difference like **ranked choice voting**, while others are much more representative but require bigger changes to the system and culture like **mixed member representative voting**. Either is an upgrade that threatens the dominant parties.

How We Ended Up Here

This will breakdown how the system currently works and why we ended up here:

- **To win** a first-past-the-post election, the candidate **must win more votes than anyone** else
 - **Even if those votes don't make up the majority.**
E.g. The most a candidate gets is a third of the votes and the rest are divided among many other candidates
- This means that a candidate can end up representing the entire district/riding even if, for example, **66% of the voters don't want them** to
 - This very thing can be seen in many elections across Canada
 - **Divergence from public sentiment starts here**
- Over time 2 parties emerge as the only realistic options for voters while the remaining parties are left getting scraps
 - This happens because **voters start voting for the candidate** they think will be **most likely to beat the one they don't like**, instead of voting for someone who represents them
 - **Smaller parties**, regardless of their popularity or potential **get slowly suffocated by** that trend of **negative voting and the associated lack of funding**
- Canada was able to avoid becoming a strictly 2 party system for a couple reasons:
 - Quebec has distinct voter preferences that can diverge from the rest of Canada, thus a third Quebecois party was always represented
 - **The Per-vote subsidy** introduced in 2004 **paid each party** a small amount of money (**~\$2**) **annually for every vote they received** in the last election held
 - It allowed poor voters to help fund their preferred party without having to use their income
 - This helped fund smaller parties in relation to their popularity, even if they didn't win any seats
 - **It was ended by the conservatives** in 2015, likely as [an attempt to starve out the other parties](#)
- **The liberals promised** ending the first-past-the-post system and **reforming elections** if they were to win the 2015 election:
 - **They instantly broke that promise after winning** a majority
 - They argued no consensus exists, realistically though, it was likely an attempt to make dethroning them harder

The Solution

Broadly speaking, these are our commitments to make elections more representative and accessible:

1. Changing the voting system

We aim to do that in two steps, first an upgrade that is better but not ideal and the other is a potentially much deeper reform that will make the government more representative. The two steps are:

- a. Immediate implementation of ranked choice voting
 - i. Requires minimal changes to the process, voters will simply rank their choices on the ballot with numbers instead of checking one choice
 - ii. Eliminate worst performing candidate and distribute votes to the next ranked candidate on the ballot until one person receives a majority
- b. Investigate how to implement a mixed-member representative voting model using an independent citizen assembly
 - i. Similar to European parliaments (other than the UK)
 - ii. Find out how to implement and test the system
 - iii. Have a referendum after testing on whether to proceed with this model or not

2. Return the per-vote subsidy

The system was an affordable government program that promoted political engagement from aspiring parties and from voters who want to support new movements

- a. By tying their funding to how many votes they get, the system rewards parties based on how appealing they are to the voters

- b. Given our ranked-choice proposal, we will have all the funding go to each voter's first choice
- c. In the spirit of fairness, after the law is implemented and until the next election, parties will receive funding based on their performance in 2021 or 2025 whichever is highest
 - i. To achieve a strong reform mandate the future party aims to get the other party's voters to strategically vote for us for just this election
 - ii. This will make sure we don't end up with an unfair advantage after the law is passed

3. Make all election days a statutory holiday

To promote voting accessibility and political engagement we will:

- a. Make all voting days a statutory holiday across all levels of government
- b. Keep voting hours as is, i.e. morning to later in the evening

The Case for Our Approach

Ranked choice IS an upgrade

Unlike our current system, ranked-choice will ensure that the winning candidate is either:

1. The favoured representative if they win more than half the votes
2. The most acceptable candidate to at least half the voters
 - a. I.e. Voters would rather have them be their representative over other alternatives in case their preferred candidate doesn't win

This system will be much more in line with what the people want than our current system. The winner of a ranked-choice ballot will have the added legitimacy of the public knowing for a fact that they are either the most desirable as a first choice representative or at least as a backup. Currently, that sentiment is not represented, a candidate that 60% of people disapprove of would still win as long he or she makes sure that 60% gets split, which is very undemocratic.

Lastly there has been research indicating that ranked-choice is even more distorted than first-past-the-post by pointing out the liberals would benefit much more from the system. This however misses the point. In the case of the research, it simply shows that in the past, while most Canadians would vote for someone other than the liberal candidate, Canadians would rather have a liberal candidate if their preferred choice doesn't win. This however is not destined to happen, if voters sentiment changes to prefer a different second choice, the outcome would be radically different.

If ranked-choice was truly going to heavily tip the balance in the liberals' favour, they would have implemented it when they had the majority in parliament. Despite promises of electoral reform they did not implement it, and that says a lot.

The per-vote subsidy is something to be proud of

A democracy is at its strongest when new, promising movements and ideas are able to pick up steam and make their case in the public space. This exchange of ideas is what makes policies resilient and effective. It is therefore risky when power gets concentrated in hands of what are effectively too big to fail political parties.

The per-vote subsidy is a simple, cheap, and robust method of helping those promising ideas spread across our huge country. It's advantages are many:

- By tying government funding of political parties to the ones that Canadians vote for we ensure that more appealing parties receive more funding
- By financing smaller parties who don't win seats based on performance, we incentivise them to improve and keep at it
- If the entire population of Canada, including those ineligible to vote, is rounded up to 40 million people and they all vote. At the cost of \$4 per vote, the subsidy will cost the government \$160 million dollars. We spend way more money on dumber things.
- Big and small parties benefit equally from the system

There really is no strong argument against it. The only negative is that some controversial parties will receive some funding from the government, but that is a minor risk compared to the risk of shutting down better political discourse.

An even more representative systems

We are aware that a mixed-member representative voting system would be one of the best ways to capture Candians' political leanings with little distortion and believe that it is worth looking more into its implementation. However, the reason we won't immediately implement it comes down to the fact that is quite different from what Canadians are used to.

That is why we endorse and will launch the independent citizen assembly first proposed by the NDP. Its goal will be to look into how exactly it should be implemented, how to reach that stage, and how to test it so Canadians get an idea of what politics will look like.

Summary

Our electoral system is cracking. Canadians are starting to lose faith in the power of their votes and their voice. It is time electoral reform becomes something more than just a promise dangled by big parties during election season then tossed out once they win. A fairer voting system with better funding for parties and easier access to voters is a right that must be protected and promoted. The big parties should rely on their reach and appeal to win and not the systemic shutting down of competition. It is in all of our best interest.

Specifics

The above reform will be achieved through these policies:

1. Ranked choice:
 - a. Immediately implemented
 - i. Use whenever the next federal election is
 - ii. The ballot instructions will need to be changed to inform voters how to rank choices using numbers (1 meaning first choice)
 - iii. The list of names on the ballots must be randomized across prints
 - b. Process
 - i. Voters can rank as many or as little of the candidates as they want
 - ii. Worst performer is eliminated and their votes are spread to the next choice on the ballot
 - iii. Winner declared once someone reaches 50%+1 votes
2. Per-vote subsidy
 - a. \$4 per vote received in last election
 - i. Annually paid out to the registered parties
 - b. The first choice in ranked-choice ballots gets all the funding
 - c. From date law is passed until next election
 - i. Funding is based on the highest amount of votes received in either of the last two federal elections
3. Voting statutory holidays
 - a. Across all levels of government
 - b. Hours remain extended as is
 - i. 9 am - 9 pm at least
4. Mixed-member representative voting
 - a. Citizen assembly established asap
 - i. Find out potential systems
 - ii. Find out reasonable implementation schedule
 - iii. Estimate costs
 - iv. Test system

- v. Referendum on adoption

Contingencies

We win a minority instead of a majority

Electoral reform will be one of our non-negotiable conditions to forming any sort of coalition agreements.