

Conservative voices for ranked ballots in Toronto

In June 2013, Toronto City Council voted 26-15 in favour of asking the province for permission to use ranked ballots. Residents of Toronto are now hoping that all parties at Queen's Park will work together to pass Bill 166, "*The Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act*". Here are some conservative voices in favour of this proposal:



"By changing the voting system, the election would result in a candidate being selected by a greater than 50% majority of voters and therefore would be the most representative of the will of the people."

Case Ootes

"All I'd like to see is far more turnover and candidates who are sent to City Hall by the majority of their residents. Run-off voting is a step in the right direction."

Sue-Ann Levy



"Our whole system is broken. We shouldn't be the victims of a system that makes winners out of losers. There is a better way to do this. It's called Instant Runoff"

Jerry Agar



"The ranked ballot would be a vast improvement over the status quo"

Andrew Coyne

Request to Examine Alternate Methods of Electing the Mayor of Toronto

Moved by Councillor Case Ootes, seconded by Councillor Mike Feldman.

Submitted to City Council on August 25 and 26, 2010

“The City of Toronto is the largest city in Canada and the Mayor of Toronto receives the most votes of any elected official in Canada. As Toronto is such a heavily populated metropolis, the race for Mayor can be highly contested with many candidates, high profile or otherwise.



To ensure that the individual who is elected is representative of the majority of voters in the City, the Municipal Elections Act should be altered to state that the race for Mayor should be decided by a form of voting that represents a result of 50% + 1. This will ensure that the Mayor has a mandate and the support of a majority of those who voted.

By changing the voting system specifically for the Mayor of Toronto, the election would result in a candidate being selected by a greater than 50% majority of voters and therefore would be the most representative of the will of the people.”



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Toronto should switch to run-off voting system

Sue-Ann Levy • Monday May 6th 2013



Allow me to provide some recent examples of the limitations of the less-than-fair system we use to vote in our mayors and councillors -- one known as the "First Past the Post Voting System."

In the 2010 election, it allowed Kristyn Wong-Tam to eke out a win in Ward 27 over 14 candidates with just 28% of the vote.

FPTP voting also crowned James Pasternak as councillor in Ward 10 over 11 candidates with a mere 19% of the vote.

In Ward 29, pro-union seat warmer Mary Fragedakis was able to scoot up the left when candidates Jane Pitfield and Jennifer Wood split the centre-right vote.

In Ward 32, gay activist Martin Gladstone was forced to drop out of the race and throw his support behind Mary-Margaret McMahon (even though he was the far better candidate) to ensure incumbent Sandra Bussin was tossed out of office.

Even Mayor Rob Ford -- despite his 11% margin of victory over his nearest opponent George Smitherman -- won the 2010 election with less than 50% of the vote. He captured 47% support.

I'm all for reforms to a system which gives an unfair advantage to an incumbent; discourages a variety of fresh choices and new voices from running if they are of similar political stripes; allows candidates to win with less than 30% of the vote (and mayors to be voted in with less than 50% of the vote) and forces voters to make strategic choices instead of the best choice if they hope to unseat an incumbent.

Two retired councillors realized that this was a huge issue in 2010, at least as far as the mayor was concerned. Before they left office, Case Ootes and Mike Feldman got council approval to look at reforms to the Municipal Elections Act that would create a system in which the race for mayor was decided by 50%+1 of the votes cast.

City staff were supposed to report back in the first year of the new term but they sat on it, as city staff are wont to do.

But activist Dave Meslin -- who ran a very creative and successful "City Idol" contest to get young people into politics in the 2006 election -- kept up the crusade.

After nearly three years of pushing the issue, it finally comes to government management committee next Monday. But as is typical, the city report provides all kinds of reasons why it can't be done for the 2014 election.

Ford, when asked about it Monday, said he'd "never heard of it" (meaning run-off voting).

But Meslin isn't worried. He recognizes change happens slowly. He hopes to get enough council support next month to pursue a ranked ballot system for the mayor's race "as a pilot" in 2018 and all council seats by 2022.

Run-off voting, or what is referred to as "ranked choice voting" in the U.S., asks voters to rank candidates in order of preference.

No candidate can win with less than 50% of the votes cast.

With Instant Run-off Voting, the method Meslin is proposing, the

candidate with the least votes is eliminated from the race and the votes for him or her are transferred to whomever a voter picks as a second choice. This is repeated if necessary until a candidate gets 50% of the vote.

Toronto would be the first city in Canada to switch to a run-off system. But it is already being used extensively in the U.S. in such cities as San Francisco and Oakland as well as in London, England. All of Canada's and Ontario's political parties use run-off voting to pick their leaders.

As Meslin told me recently over lunch, a run-off system encourages new voices, increases political turnover and makes campaigns "more positive" and less polarizing.

He also feels a run-off system would attract more women candidates and would allow voters to "really get behind" a candidate.

Women, men, left, right or centrist candidates, it doesn't matter.

All I'd like to see is far more turnover and candidates who are sent to City Hall by the majority of their residents.

It might not cure all that ails municipal politics -- like attracting really sharp candidates who are in it for the right reasons, not just power and glory.

But run-off voting sure is a step in the right direction.

