

Delegation on Ranked Ballots - 2020-09-17

Roland Tanner

I will keep this short.

I support Option 2 as set out in the staff report. As I said a month ago, if an Option 4 were on the table which implemented the successful process used in London, Ontario, I would support that instead.

The arguments in favour of ranked ballots are extensive and more and more jurisdictions are adopting them across North America. I won't repeat them - they're in my previous delegation and I hope you are familiar with them by now.

But there are advantages to you as councillors. With ranked ballots nobody can say you were lucky to win. Nobody can talk about a split votes. If you win, you have support from over 50% of the public. End of discussion. There's a reason why political parties use ranked ballots to choose leaders. There's a reason that many councils use ranked ballots internally when they need to replace councillors who resign or retire early.

And I will repeat one point. If you consider a referendum, please do it **after** the first election under the new system, as democratic reform activist Dave Meslin also suggested this week. Please don't ask people to vote on something they have not experienced first hand.

Finally, as a former historian who researched the origins of democratic institutions, I can't resist a short history lesson. Our first past the post system of voting is a relic of the earliest English parliamentary elections dating back to 1265. That's the reason why it is almost exclusively former members of the British Empire that still use first past the post. It was a classic case of British imperial hubris that thought there could be no improvement made on their way of doing things and insisted that colonized lands and dominions do imitate the mother country.

As a system for a handful of landowners to choose a local aristocrat in the 1300s, it probably worked well enough, but as a system for choosing our representatives in the 2020s, it is not fit for purpose.

Once again. This council was elected with a mandate for change. Here we have something that is entirely within your purview to adopt. There's no province to get in your way.

I urge you to seize the opportunity before you, and request staff to begin the work required to see our next election held under fair voting rules.