

Thursday, February 27th, 2014

Dear Sirs and Mesdames:

We, in the non-partisan Movement for Voter Equality, a newly-formed national organization, wish to express our congratulations to the City of Toronto for its successful lobbying efforts to attain broad jurisdiction over its own voting system, beyond that achieved by any other municipal government in Canada to date. With the presentation of private members' bills by Toronto MPPs Mitzie Hunter and Jonah Schein to dramatically expand your council's ability to adopt alternative voting systems, we are writing to offer our assistance, as well as congratulations, to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Council.

Our organization, which comprises experts, activists and civil society leaders on voting reform and voter equality from across Canada, is uniquely positioned to offer information, advice and assistance in the reform process going forward in three key areas:

1. Consultation Process Design: Our directors, Stuart Parker and John Deverell, participated in the hearings of the Buller Commission that drafted the City of Toronto Act and were acknowledged in the commission report for their advocacy of the kind of jurisdictional transfer with respect to voting systems, now underway. It is on this basis, that they were called before the Procedure and House Affairs Committee and Queens Park to speak on local voting systems and related jurisdictional questions.

In addition to familiarity with and prior participation in the Toronto voting systems debate, Dr. Parker was one of six electoral reform experts who worked with Gordon Gibson to create the BC Citizens's Assembly on Electoral Reform, the first of its kind in Canada, on behalf of the BC government in 2001. He and Dr. Julian West (then of the University of Victoria) are credited with producing the modifications to the deliberative polling model that guaranteed a floor of aboriginal representation on the Assembly in the enabling legislation.

In addition, MoVE director Dr. Amy Salmon of the UBC School of Population and Public Health has led a number of tri-council-funded qualitative research projects creating representative focus groups, working most recently with the Alberta Ministry of Health and Health Canada.

2. Policy Evaluation: In addition to her work assembling and convening deliberative, consultive and representative focus groups for peer-reviewed studies, Dr. Salmon also works in the field of program evaluation, having conducted evaluations for Health Canada and the BC Ministry of Health.

MoVE's board also includes intern-architect Craig Henschel, former member of the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and current Vice-Chair of the City of Burnaby Advisory Planning Commission whose municipally-focused expertise complements Dr. Salmon's expertise in making specific recommendations with respect to the feasibility of both the public process for system design and barriers and opportunities in enacting the recommendations of both councillors and citizens arising from said process.

3. Legal Framework: The work and studies of our directors, award-winning constitutional lawyer John Carpay and University of Toronto law student Skye Sepp focus on issues of the legal equality of Canadian citizens and the meanings of this equality in governance debates. Mr. Carpay is especially

conversant with equality rights questions in jurisdictionally-constrained, self-governing environments such as university campuses and municipalities and has won precedent-setting cases in this field. It is our view that they can also provide assistance to councillors with safeguarding equality provisions in voting systems that are locally untested or novel creations of Toronto citizens.

It is our view that, even prior to enactment of this provincial legislation, it is vitally important that the City of Toronto prepare for what now appears to be an inevitable expansion of its jurisdiction in two main areas:

1. Citizen Education: Prior to the City of Vancouver's voting systems referendum in 1996, the local government produced a Voters' Booklet, sent to every voter, including educational material about all voting systems that could be enacted by the city, developed in partnership with Dr. Parker. Irrespective of whether Toronto citizens are consulted via commission, referendum or both, it is important to begin educational work today, if the city is contemplating the enactment of new voting systems for the 2018 elections.

Fortunately, the City has an opportunity to leverage the current election to begin citizen education processes. Simply notifying voters that they are voting under the single-member plurality (SMP) voting system and how its ballot-casting and ballot-counting processes are distinctive would be an important first step in processes of citizen education. Working with the Elections Services branch of your government, additional online materials and smaller print run publications could also be developed, introducing interested voters to the alternatives to SMP voting that the city might consider for 2018.

Many of our directors are highly experienced in citizen education around apparently complex second-order process and mathematical issues. Particularly noteworthy is the work of Troy Lanigan, longtime Canadian Taxpayers' Federation director, who has brought to life complex issues of municipal public finance to a popular audience in recent years. Dr. Salmon, whose degree and past teaching work were in the field of pedagogy, teacher education and public policy education, also offers important expertise in this area.

2. Electoral Boundaries: MoVE has been following the current Toronto Ward Boundary review process since its inception on June 11th, 2013 and notes that the scheduled consultant's report, work plan and engagement/consultation recommendations have either just been presented or will be presented to the Executive Committee in the immediate future. Given the very real possibility that the next election will be conducted under a voting system other than SMP, it is our view that the commission's TOR should be modified to produce electoral maps for use under all of the systems the city will be permitted to enact. There is clear precedent for this work from the British Columbia provincial boundaries commission that reported in 2008 with two maps, one of multi-member districts of between two and seven members and one of single-member districts. It is our view that the Ward Boundaries process should follow the BC model and produce three maps of the city, given the latitude it now possesses:
 - a. a map of single-member districts to be elected under SMP or instant runoff voting (IRV),
 - a ranked ballot system,

- b. a map of multi-member districts of between two and eleven members, to be elected under multi-member plurality voting also known as “block vote” (BV) or single transferrable vote, a ranked ballot system that produces proportional representation, and
- c. a map of single-member districts to be elected under SMP or instant runoff voting (IRV), a ranked ballot system, overlaid with a city-wide multi-member district, to be elected under BV or STV

Dr. Parker is highly experienced in making, structuring and organizing representations to electoral boundaries commissions professionally since his 1997; his professional services as an expert on boundaries processes have been retained by both the Green and New Democratic parties in the past. Most recently, his recommendation concerning reporting protocols was adopted by the federal boundaries commission for BC in 2013 in their final report.

We wish to reiterate our enthusiasm for assisting council collectively and individual members of council one-on-one in moving forward with voter equality in Toronto. Similarly, we wish to repeat our appreciation for Council’s leadership on this issue in seeking the powers needed to redress citizen inequality in your city.

Yours for equal votes in Toronto,



Stuart Parker,
On behalf of the MoVE: the Movement for Voter Equality board of directors

Cc Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto
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