

***We should commit to establishing a system of preferential balloting for general elections, so that a person is only elected MP after he or she reaches at least 50% of the vote. I support some form of proportional representation – I have done so for many years – but being practical, a preferential ballot system is politically far more achievable. Once we get that, we can keep working toward some form of PR.***

A preferential ballot is where a voter doesn't just vote for one person, but lists his or her choices in order of preference. If their first candidate comes in last in votes, that candidate is dropped from the running, and the voter's second choice votes are allocated to that candidate. And so on. The first candidate to win 50% plus 1 of the votes becomes the MP.

There are several advantages:

1. No MP is elected without having over 50% of the voters in that riding thinking that he or she is at least "OK". In the system now, in 2011 a lot of MPs were elected with significantly less than 50% of the vote, but because they had more votes than any one other single candidate. In Willowdale, I came in second by only 932 votes, but the Conservative candidate still did not come close to 50%. There is a very good chance that a large majority of the people who voted for the NDP candidate (who came third) would have listed me as their second choice. None of us have any doubt that had we had a preferential ballot system in place, I would still be the MP for Willowdale. (Although that's not the only reason I support the concept!) This is important, because only a minority of voters in Willowdale actually voted for the eventual MP – by far the majority did NOT want him as their MP.
2. In an age when we're struggling to make politics relevant, and to encourage people, particularly young people, to vote, this system makes each vote count far more. With it, if there is a clear leader during a campaign who many voters don't support, those voters would know that their vote could make a difference, and hopefully, would be inclined to participate. In the current system, voters would be inclined to say, "That person is going to win anyway, so why bother?"
3. The conduct of campaigns has become so American-like with personal attacks and various forms of mud-slinging. Alternatively, when you know that you may need the 2<sup>nd</sup> ballot support of the other candidates, you tend to be a lot nicer and more respectful. What a concept!