

It's time to evolve as a province

Proportional representation will save us from more Stephen Harpers and Plan 'B' highways

The Guardian (Charlottetown) · 12 May 2016 · A9 · BY TERESA DOYLE Teresa Doyle of Bellevue is an award-winning P.E.I. musician and political activist

Every time I drive over the Plan B section of the Trans Canada Highway I get riled. We spent millions to create a dangerous highway.

If you go off the road you could plunge 80 feet. In a citizen's plebiscite 91 per cent of Islanders begged former premier Robert Ghiz to abandon the project but our concerns were ignored.

And then there was the Harper occupation. He was a party of one, a vindictive, mean-spirited individual with a blatant disregard for every democratic tradition. But that didn't matter. Our current voting system first past the post, FPTP, gave him all the power even though only 39 per cent of the country voted for him. If there is one thing Canadians should learn from that episode is never again.

In November, Islanders will have a chance to vote for a new electoral system. Canada, the U.K. and the Americans are virtually the last three democracies hanging on to the antiquated FPTP. Fully 85 countries in the OECD have proportional representation.

One of the options on the plebiscite, Preferential Ballot, is even worse than FPTP. It rewards the party in the middle. Experts predict Preferential Ballot will give us Liberal majorities forever (Trudeau might have had 40 more seats). FPTP Plus must also be avoided. It throws a bone to the majority who did not vote for the winning party by including the leaders of the Greens and NDP but Peter Bevan-Baker is already in the legislature, so we would go through this costly exercise to gain just one seat.

Mixed Member Proportional is tried and true around the world. Dual Member Proportional, DMP is even better, tailor made for P.E.I. With either system, if a party gets 40 per cent of the vote they get 40 per cent of the seats. Parties would have to co-operate and listen to the public.

No more Plan Bs, Homburg hotels or other schemes hatched by party insiders. It's time we evolve as a province and a country and embraced a modern electoral system.