

HARPER'S UNFAIR ELECTIONS ACT LOOKS TO DISENFRANCHISE ALL BUT THE MOST COMMITTED VOTERS

By: Kerry Morris - October 9, 2015



"If you were frustrated by the electoral process during the 2010 Federal election, then you're done, cause this one is going to drive you stark raving mad!"

I have just exercised my singular chance at democracy for the next '4' years, This is my one and only chance to affect change at the Federal level of our Canadian government, but to do so was both frustrating and maddening, to say the least.

Advance polls opened at 12:00 Noon today, Friday October 9th, 2015. My polling station is Sutherland Secondary School. I arrive to vote and I am greeted by two very nice people (two women). I'm asked for proof of ID with a valid address, and to produce my Voter ID Card.

I comply. At this point I look around. There are 5 rows of seats, 15 chairs in each row, and the first two rows are full, and the third row is half full and growing quickly. Several people are standing at the table next to me, contemplating what to do. One of the nice women at the first table says to me: **"It will be a half-hour wait to vote"**. The couple in front of me turn and leave. They will not wait.

I look beyond the first table, to the second. There are another two ladies working at that second table. They are tasked with confirming each person's ID, providing them with a ballot, sending them off to the third table, outfitted with a single makeshift voter booth, at which each voter then places an "X" in the circle next to the candidate of their choosing, then returns with the executed ballot, hands it back to the ladies, where they remove a numbered tag, hand it back once again to the voter, who is then instructed to shift to the right and place the executed ballot in a cardboard ballot box. The slit into which the ballot is slide is covered with a paper on which there is writing of little or no consequence because no one is afforded a chance to read whatever is written there. You sign another document confirming you've received a ballot and the process is over.

By the time I take the decision to stay the estimated 30 minutes and vote (today being the only day I will be able to attend a polling station), the line has grown and I take the last seat in the third row of seats. There are now about 45 people waiting ahead of me and one in that singular polling booth. The time estimate is wrong. It takes me close to 45 minutes before I am done and leaving. I am not impressed. As a candidate in the last municipal election, I voted at the CNV advance polling station. They had at least 8 different polling booths and the process took me only 5 minutes in total to complete. Given the abysmally low turnout in municipal elections versus federal elections, the process I witness ensures that Election Day is going to be a complete "Gong-Show".

I watch as people come to vote and discover the wait time. A look of horror crosses their faces, they look at their watches or consult their phones for the exact time, and then they leave pledging to return when the line is shorter, and the time more abundant, but you can see in their eyes that their return is indeed uncertain. By frustrating the process the Harper Government is ensuring that only the most committed will make the investment of time. The disillusioned will never make this investment. I believe Harper knows this fact and has engineered a process to ensure this outcome, taking comfort in the fact his base will not shirk from their responsibility, but he is counting on the rest of us being just that lazy and disillusioned as I describe.

I watch as a full 30% of voters leave without ever casting a vote. I am disgusted and frustrated. I know first hand from the last municipal election how hard it can be to get out the vote. So to see the rate of success stifled by a process made overly slow through poor planning, or is it willful planning to ensure failure, makes me more committed than ever. I vote! So must you. **Do your duty and don't delay!**