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Not all qualified voters have full enfrancisement in this election: advocacy group

21.5 per cent of all Ontario citizens, more than three million citizens, including all in York Region, will not have the democratic right to elect all their municipal representatives in the municipal election.

It is a charter right to vote.

It is a human right to vote.

It is a civil liberty to vote.

Why are the citizens of York Region to be partially deprived of this fundamental right?

THE ISSUE

?Bill 5 Better Local Government Act 2018? creates a jurisdiction that will have two types of citizens: those with full democratic rights and those without. In fact, 21.5 per cent of Ontario's population, or more than three million citizens, will be partially disenfranchised. It is a two-class entitlement system. This is indefensible. This is not democracy.

Since Confederation, groups who were not enfranchised (i.e. Aboriginal people, women, Japanese, Chinese, to name some) fought long and hard to win the right to vote. Over the past few years, many of York Region's citizens have also fought for full enfranchisement. They want the right to vote for the most senior elected representative they have, to wit the Chair of York Regional Council.

This right was realized when the law was changed in 2016 after the introduction of the Bill to make this change by then-MPP Chris Ballard.

It was not a partisan stance. Here is a sketch of the support throughout several attempts to affect this change in York Region:

In addition to Chris Ballard, supports included the then-MPP for Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees (PC), the then-MPP for Richmond Hill Reza Moridi (Liberal), the MPP for Thornhill Gila Martow (PC), the then MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham Helena Jaczek (Liberal), the then-MPP for Simcoe North Julia Munro (PC), who not only supported the bill, but also spoke in support of the bill in the Legislature.

This is not support from a few partisan individuals. It is support from a majority of our MPPs, regardless of political stripe, representing the ridings of voters in York Region. This is not a partisan issue. Revoking this right is not democratic.

The Discrepancy Among Two-Tier Municipalities:

With reference to the Province-wide picture for voters in two-tier municipalities, Ontario has 30 two-tier municipalities (eight regional municipalities and 22 county municipalities), York Region being one of the eight regional municipalities; the 2016 Census puts their total population at 6,622,900. This represents 49 per cent of Ontario's population. Bill 5 will probably disenfranchise 45% of the 49% who live in two-tier municipalities. Included in the ?fully franchised? two-tier municipalities are three of the eight Regional municipalities.

Why are the Regional Municipalities of Halton, Waterloo and Durham excluded from this partial disenfranchisement? Why is it only Niagara, Muskoka, Peel and York that are having this right to directly elect their top municipal politician revoked?

This matters because it clearly gives some citizens more entitlement to democratic rights than others, even among Regional municipalities. This is not acceptable. This is not democracy.

In conclusion, it is democratic rights ? a foundational principle of our country ? that are being jeopardized. This must not be tolerated. When it comes to democratic rights and any actions that diminish them, we should not have to fight to protect them. Citizens of a country known for fighting for the protection of democratic rights of all peoples around the globe are both demeaned and devalued when its own rights are arbitrarily diminished.

The action is a threat to democratic rights and freedoms.

It is intolerable.

Pat Taylor
Past Chair,
Social Planning Council of York Region