

# Democratic reform: Making your vote count

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

**For government to be truly democratic**, citizens need to know that their votes count equally— but Canadian elections too often fail to meet that promise.

Canada's first-past-the-post voting system once served us well. But this ancient system, invented before electricity, now consistently leaves countless Canadians under-represented in Parliament. And an unfair system is made even worse when elected MPs ignore their voters' wishes and freely switch parties between elections.

Many Prime Ministers have committed to strengthen our democracy, but not one has moved forward. At the same time, each has protected the undemocratic, \$80-million-a-year Senate—where political appointees work three days a week at best, rarely before 1:30 p.m., without any accountability to citizens.

It doesn't have to be this way.

It's time for a Prime Minister who's ready to abolish the Senate and upgrade our voting system. A Prime Minister who will deliver the change we need to make your vote count.

Jack Layton will be that Prime Minister.

**Don't let them tell you it can't be done!**

**Jack  
Layton**  
NDP



## Stephen Harper can't be trusted.

- To conduct public consultations on options for voting reform, he hired the Frontier Centre for Public Policy—a right-wing group that aggressively opposes voting reform.
- His Bill C-31 imposed new voter identification requirements that create new barriers to voting for marginalized low-income people.
- He disdained the democratic process by staffing his cabinet with the unelected Michael Fortier and with David Emerson—lured over just days after he was elected as a Liberal.
- His focus on “reforming” the undemocratic Senate—instead of phasing it out—is a smokescreen to delay bringing fairness to the elected House of Commons.
- His party is under investigation for allegedly trying to get around the Elections Act with a so-called “in and out” fundraising scheme.

## Stephane Dion is not the change we need.

- He disdained the democratic process by instructing most Liberal MPs to skip all 44 confidence votes in the most recent minority Parliament.
- He was part of the Liberal cabinet that promised to implement Ed Broadbent’s voting reform process in 2005—then failed to do so. That’s not the change we need.

## Jack Layton’s New Democrats: Making your vote count every time.

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats are fighting for a stronger democracy where every vote counts. Already, Layton’s team has led the way in Parliament:

- Tabled legislation to **close election financing loopholes** that allow big-money interests to skirt around donation limits by playing shell games with “loans.”
- Tabled a motion to move forward with an expert committee and citizens’ engagement process to choose a **fairer federal voting system** that incorporates proportional representation.
- Tabled a motion to hold a national referendum to **abolish the undemocratic senate**—defeated by Conservative and Liberal MPs.
- Introduced a bill **banning “floor-crossing”** so MPs wishing to switch parties between elections would have to go back and seek voters’ approval in a by-election.
- Earlier, in October 2005, former NDP MP **Ed Broadbent** won unanimous Parliamentary approval for his voting reform process and timeline—through the Liberal cabinet broke its commitment to move forward.