



Spinoff

ROTARY CLUB OF WEST OTTAWA
Graeme Fraser, President

October 5 2021 Editor: Don Butler

PROGRAM Peter Black: An Electoral System:-Proportional Representation

Meeting Video <https://youtu.be/see4Ypy4Q10>

President Graeme Fraser convened the 14th meeting of the Rotary year and acknowledged the ages-old stewardship by the Algonquin-Anishinabek people of their unceded aboriginal lands we occupy.

O Canada was sung a capella by the Nylons. **Pres. Graeme** told us that some schools this use this to start their day and that the kids shout O Canada at the end of it.

Today's guests: seasonal member Tony Watkins, Theresa Jamone (probably a member at our next meeting) and Peter Black, our speaker.

Speaker Intro

President Graeme told us Peter Black had retired as Assistant Director of Policy Analysis, Federal Office of Energy Efficiency and asked **Andrew Young** to complete the introduction

Andrew Young said he had known Peter for 40 years from the time as young parents they and their wives were in a neighbourhood baby-sitting club together. The babies are now adults, so the club has become a supper club. Peter had always had a wide range of interests and he is now focused on climate change, on which he has worked with Prof Gerald Oakham who spoke to us last month, and electoral systems

Club items

There was a glitch in Peter's slide presentation, so **President Graeme** passed on to other meeting business while the glitch was being addressed and recognized PP **Caroline Dewitt**. **PP Caroline** announced that the Club had been awarded 2020-21 Rotary Citation by Rotary International (RI) for meeting all 19 of the goals we had selected from the 23 options. These included increasing membership, youth service, public image etc.

Ron Doll told us there were still a few places open at our Oktoberfest event Oct 16. Email him if you are interested.

President Graeme told us that next week **Bea Osome** would be auctioning off three sculptures she brought back from Kenya. These would help fund the Osomes' latest project. **Bea's** husband Ben had told him that they keep thinking that they have done enough but then God pushes them to do one more project **Jim Maxwell** interjected to add this project, the biggest so far, is to get a District matching grant and build a toilet facility at one of the places they have dug a well.

Larry Chop told us about the group visit to Mud Lake and showed some pictures of the wildlife they had seen and having coffee together afterwards He told us he was planning to be at Mud Lake again in a few days at 6:45 a.m. to watch the Canada geese take off to feed in the surrounding fields.

Presentation

Peter Black's slide presentation was now functional, so he started with the basic point that democracy is rule by the majority expressed through one of two major voting systems: first-past-the-post (FP) or proportional representation (PR). With only two parties as in Canada until 1933, FP works okay. With more than two parties FP often results in rule by a party with less than a majority. Since World War II only the Diefenbaker and the Mulroney governments had a majority.

Ideally a party's share of the vote should be reflected in its share of the number of seats it holds in parliament. Peter showed us a graph illustrating how far from this our system is with the NDP winning a significant number of votes but very few seats and the two major parties more seats that would be justified by their share of the vote. PR addresses this.

There are several PR systems. Mixed member proportional (MMP) voting tops up the number of seat won to match vote share by giving voters one vote for a riding representative and a second for one's choice from a list of party representatives to sit in the legislature if needed to match the share of the vote. New Zealand and

Germany have this. Single transferable vote systems (STV) have ridings with more than one representative and voters rank all (if they wish) the candidates according to their preference. If a ballot's first ranked candidate is eliminated in the run-off then the second ranking and lower rankings are considered until the full number of representatives is chosen. Scotland and Ireland are among those using this system.

FP systems tempt governments to hold snap elections like the one just past. Campaigning tends to be longer and more regional. Under PR there is little incentive for snap elections, campaigning is less divisive- one may have to include one's opponents in a coalition after the election- voter participation is higher as voters know they will have some representation and there is little reason for "strategic voting".

Policies under FP reflect only a minority of voters. There is policy "Lurch" when governments reverse the policy of predecessors. Under PR parties must cooperate. The focus can be on longer-term issues like climate change. Most countries outside of the Commonwealth use a form of PR. Patterns of Democracy by Arend Lijphart compares 36 democracies over 50 years and finds that PR and FP do roughly equally in economic policy but PR outperforms on a political equality, voter turnout, women's representation, welfare and environment.

In June 2021 a parliamentary committee approved a motion to study establishment of a national citizens assembly on electoral reform. This was supported by the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc but not the Conservatives. Fair Vote Canada, and organization supporting electoral reform, is campaigning for the establishment of this citizens assembly. Peter called on us each to ask our MP about this. He would like the recommendation of a citizens assembly to be implemented in two elections and then confirmed by a national referendum

Jim Maxwell asked about the ranked ballot favoured by PM Trudeau and the concern that the party list in MMP gave too much power to the parties. Peter said Trudeau like ranked ballots because they favored the middle parties like the Liberals (Ed.note-they are also not PR but another form of winner-take-all like FP). On the MMP make up list it can be made up democratically by party members and, if it's an open list as in Germany, voters can vote on who from the list should be selected to make up the party share of legislature seats.

Andrew Young thanked Peter Black for his explanation of some complex issues of proportional representation and told him of the donation to End Polio to mark his presentation

Birthdays:

Joan Heyland gave birthday wishes on behalf of the Club to **Onyinye Abu, Dawn DeWitt, Pardeep Ahluwalia** and **Alan Bowles** who are celebrating before our next meeting.

Meeting ends

Pres. Graeme regretted that we had run out of time for Happy \$ and told us the next meeting would feature Rocco DiSipio telling us of the successful Mums campaign. He called on us to sell Cash Calendars and adjourned the meeting

12 October 2021

12:00 socialize; meeting starts 12:30

Rocco Disipio: The 2021 Mums for Thanksgiving Campaign

Introduced & Thanked: **Don Butler**

Scribe: **Roy Miller**

Meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81365346181>

See **President Graeme** email for log-in details