

**JAGMEET SINGH**

DÉPUTÉ | MP, BURNABY SOUTH | BURNABY-SUD

November 4, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

As you know, Canada's first-past-the-post voting system consistently produces parliaments that do not reflect the true preference of Canadian voters.

This parliament has proven once again that false majorities are not required to make Parliament work. Only months after an election that produced a minority government, an unprecedented global pandemic broke out. Despite its many twists and turns, this parliament rose to the occasion and authorized a pandemic response that kept millions of Canadians housed and fed during the biggest social and economic upheaval we have faced in generations.

This shows both an opportunity for and the importance of finding a way forward on important democratic reforms. New Democrats want to find a way forward toward the kind of reform we know Canadians would like to see in a spirit of cooperation and openness.

There is growing momentum behind the idea of a citizens' assembly to craft an effective way forward on voting reform. 80% of Canadians would support such an initiative, and we are ready to work with you to make it a reality.

The negotiation and compromise characteristic of this parliament are key contributors to the success we have seen. Across the globe, countries with proportional representation have mounted some of the most effective pandemic responses. This is not in spite of, but because of, the fact that their voting systems promote a wider distribution of power and require more collaboration between political parties in order to govern.

Canadians understand these dynamics very well. A recent Leger poll shows that 97% of Canadians want a democratic system that encourages parties to work together more in the public interest. The same poll shows that 93% of Canadians support the idea that laws passed in Parliament should have the support of parties representing at least 50% of voters.

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In the last parliament, the Special Committee on Electoral Reform played an important role in advancing the conversation about voting reform. New Democrats were heartened that the committee was able to propose a path forward and share the disappointment of countless Canadians that your government chose not to embark on that path.

That decision was a hard lesson for the country about the role of cynicism in electoral politics. Upon reflection, it was also a lesson in the perils of counting on the people who have a vested interest in the current system to develop proposals to change it.

I note with interest that the *Supplemental Report of the Liberal members of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform* recommended: "That the Government further undertake a period of comprehensive and effective citizen engagement before proposing specific changes to the current federal voting system." A citizens' assembly would be in keeping with this recommendation.

By your own declaration, 2015 was to be the last election under the first-past-the-post-system. We all know that was not the case, but that fact should not preclude progress on voting reform for a generation.

It is up to us as Canadians' representatives to keep moving the ball forward. While a majority of Members of Parliament may not be able to agree on a new voting system, it remains to be seen whether we could agree to entrust Canadians to find the best way forward in a citizens' assembly.

New Democrats believe we can, and should, take that next step. With your support we could do that without delay.

It is not too late to keep your promise to end the first-past-the-post system and redeem your reputation as an honest advocate of voting reform. Your next steps will tell the tale. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jagmeet Singh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jagmeet" and the last name "Singh" clearly legible.

Jagmeet Singh, MP (Burnaby South)
Leader, Canada's New Democrats