

Taylor, Laura

From: Kiley,Robert <rkiley@cityofkingston.ca>
Sent: November 4, 2020 4:47 PM
To: Standing Committee on Justice Policy
Cc: Arthur-QP, Ian
Subject: Written Correspondence Re: Bill 218

Dear Members of the Ontario Legislature Justice Committee;

Please accept my thoughts below concerning Bill 218. I had applied to present to you at 2020-11-04 Public Hearings but I was unfortunately shut out, as I understand a number of other city councillors were as well.

Indeed, as a city councillor in Kingston, I was surprised - and dismayed - to hear of proposed amendments to the *Municipal Elections Act* which would remove Ranked Ballots as an option for municipal elections; potential changes suggested with no community consultation.

I'd say voting systems for local government should be the purview of local government, not Queen's Park.

Indeed, I share the sentiment of Premier Ford (as he explicitly stated to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario last year): the provincial government needs to get out of the way of City Halls, leaving us to our own affairs. Bill 218 does the opposite.

In Kingston, for example, nearly 21,000 residents voted in favour of Ranked Ballots in the 2018 referendum on that very topic. In other words: in the most direct form of institutional democracy currently available to us, constituents clearly said (with 63% of the vote) that they support a move away from First Past The Post to Ranked Ballots.

To put the numbers in context, if you totalled all the winning councillors' votes in Kingston, you'd sum roughly 16,000 votes. That is to say - save the mayor - the resounding mandate from our last local election is for Ranked Ballots.

Moreover, Ranked Ballots are proven, simple, and effective tools that deepen democracy, increase diversity, and encourage civility – realities I think we all agree are needed in politics. Perhaps that's why all federal and provincial parties use them in their leadership races.

Concerning costs: Ranked Ballots represent small change for big change. In my city, for instance, the Clerk's Office has estimated that Ranked Ballots will cost between \$200-300,000 in additional expenditure per election. That's approximately \$3.50/voter/term, equal to 7 cents a month. That's an infinitesimally small portion of the \$2,000,000,000 (\$2B) municipal spending in Kingston in the same time frame.

I believe that a system which gives women, people of colour, and positive politicians an increased chance of being elected is worth this, frankly, shockingly low financial investment.

Lastly, I am writing this letter the day after yet another successful Kingston council motion to support Ranked Ballots (all three of which previously, supported over the last four years, have passed). I do this to bring even more attention to the issue.

But these thoughts are not mine alone. I know that many of my council colleagues share these convictions, in Kingston and across the province. Statements from Peterborough, Barrie, Cambridge, and other municipalities, demonstrate this. All voices I believe are incumbent to hear from.

In short, I hope that you will adhere to the fundamental principles of democracy in respecting Kingstonians' will

on Ranked Ballots. Doing so will benefit all of Ontario by keeping appropriate autonomy for municipalities in elections. Please remove the potential amendments to the *Municipal Elections Act* in Bill 218.

Kindly,
Councillor Robert Kiley
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