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Halton Hills sticking with first-past-the-post

Continued from page 3

It is also important to note that ranked ballots would only apply to members of council, not in the election of school board trustees or regional chairs.

Most of the concerns levied by members of council Monday night surrounded a lack of precedence and clarity on exactly how ranked ballots would work or make the process fairer. Some councillors also voiced infrastructure concerns about whether the town's current voting system could be modified to accommodate ranked ballots.

I support (staff's) recommendation of sitting tight until 2018. I like to lead and I think this council likes to lead, but this might be one where we might want to take a back seat on the bus and let somebody else drive it, said Mayor Rick Bonnette. I think this could (lead to) a lot of mass confusion.

Under the first-past-the-post system, which is currently employed by all three levels of Canadian government, voters choose their preferred candidate and the candidate in any given electoral district receiving the most votes wins.

Under a ranked-ballot system sometimes referred to as preferential system voters rank their top choices from most preferred to least. The number of choices is tied to the number of candidates and seats available. The idea being that even if a voter's top choice doesn't make the cut, their second or third choice might and their voice will still be represented on council.

Votes are counted in stages with ranked ballots. After the first round of counting the candidate with the least votes is eliminated, at which point their supporters' second choices are added to the next round of counting. The process then repeats until a winner emerges with a majority of support.

Ultimately, the question of which system is preferable comes down to whether an individual voter defines a majority by who gets the most votes, or by who has the most overall support among the electorate based on rankings.

Proponents of ranked-ballots argue that such systems eliminate vote splitting and restores majority rule by ensuring no one can win with less than 50 per cent support among voters.

Opponents claim its confusing and doesn't really reflect majority rule because a candidate who was the majority's second or third choice could ultimately beat out a candidate who received more first place votes.

That is one of the issues that has been raised by a number of municipal clerks, said Jones. Is there merit that your first choice, second choice and third choice ends up having the same weighting?

This was the position shared by most members of council who spoke on the matter and ultimately voted not to make any changes before the next election.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it, added Ward 3 councillor David Kentner.



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