

# POWER SHIFT

From Party Elites  
to Informed Citizens

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Overwhelmingly, Canadians want MPs to represent their constituents' views in the House of Commons rather than following the edicts of a party Prime Minister.

POWER SHIFT presents a practical, achievable model of the constituency representation Canadians want, and shows how its adoption would overcome the fundamental weaknesses in the current political system.

Foreword by **Alan Cairns** Past President of the Canadian  
Political Science Association

# Power Shift : From Party Elites to Informed Citizens

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Fed up with politics as usual? Most Canadians are, and an overwhelming eighty-three percent want their MP to represent them-not a party-in the House of Commons. Without pressure from the people, however, political parties wont consider fundamental reforms to give power back to the people. In Power Shift, author Vaughan Lyon draws on his years of experience as a party activist and political scientist to delve into why and how Canadian political reform must occur. He explores Canadians desire for a different form of representation-constituency representation-based on citizen participation in making policy and electing MPs. Lyon presents a detailed model of the new politics, shows how its adoption will improve the responsiveness of government, and outlines how it can be organized responsibly at little cost. He also explains how this model would establish the close collaborative relationship of citizens, their MPs, and government and civil servants, a bond essential for the government to meet challenges and rise to Canadas great opportunities. Conditions are ripe for change, and the time for Canadians to wrest control of their MPs from political parties is now. That the political systems of the democratic world, and the institutions which channel political life in Canada and elsewhere, are in trouble will surprise no one. Vaughan Lyons contribution to the agonised introspection triggered by that crisis is distinguished by the comprehensiveness of his critique and its accompanying thesis that piecemeal tinkering or adhocery cannot provide the transformative change that is required. Very little emerges unscathed from his probing and well-documented critique. ... His prime focus is the party system, isolated by party discipline in the legislature from the citizenry it is supposed to serve. The thesis that parties are instruments of democratic citizenship is the great delusion. In fact they are a barrier to a twenty-first-century democracy. ... Vaughan Lyons goal is an empowered citizenry, the necessary support for the strengthened government needed to grapple with twenty-first century challenges. The alienation of citizens from government is to be reversed with government firmly rooted in the citizenry. ... Professor Lyon advocates a quiet Canadian democratic revolution. He invites the reader to accompany him on the path to that future. -Alan Cairns, past president of the Canadian Political Science Association

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