



# One Ballot, Two Votes

## A NEW WAY TO VOTE IN ONTARIO

Recommendation of the  
Ontario Citizens' Assembly  
on Electoral Reform

May 15, 2007



Citizens' Assembly  
on Electoral Reform

L'Assemblée des citoyens  
sur la réforme électorale

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## MEMBERS OF THE ONTARIO CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

# SUMMARY

We, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, recommend a new way to vote that builds on the province's traditions and reflects the values that we believe are important to Ontarians. The Assembly recommends that Ontario adopt a Mixed Member Proportional system, specifically designed to meet the unique needs of Ontario.

The provincial government gave the Assembly a mandate to assess Ontario's current electoral system and others, and to recommend whether the province should retain its current system or adopt a new one. The Assembly was made up of 103 voters randomly selected from each of Ontario's electoral districts, plus the Chair, George Thomson, who was appointed by the government.

From September 2006 through April 2007, the Assembly studied electoral systems – the way votes are translated into seats in a legislature. We read, researched, learned from one another, listened to experts and politicians, consulted with Ontarians, analyzed, debated, and deliberated. The Assembly worked independently of government and does not represent any political party.

In meetings with fellow Ontarians, many people advised the Assembly not to propose sweeping reform, but rather to build on the province's current electoral system. We took this advice to heart. The Mixed Member Proportional system we have designed is a made-in-Ontario solution: It preserves the strong local representation of the current system and adds new elements that will increase voter choice and produce fairer election results.

On Ontario's next election day, October 10, 2007, there will be a referendum on the Assembly's recommendation for a Mixed Member Proportional system for Ontario. If you are eligible to vote, you will have a decision to make. This report to the government and to the people of Ontario explains how the new system works and why the Assembly recommends it.

The Assembly was entrusted with an important task on an issue that is fundamental to our democracy. We undertook that task with commitment and vigour on behalf of the people of Ontario. We concluded that a Mixed Member Proportional system is the best electoral system for the province. We hope that our recommendation will inspire your confidence.

.....  
"A Mixed Member Proportional system provides proportionality while preserving our direct local connection to government. It retains the best features of our current system and remedies its deficiencies."  
.....

– Participant at public meeting, Kingston

## A MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM FOR ONTARIO

A Mixed Member Proportional system combines members elected in local districts and members elected for the whole province from party lists to serve as Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) in the legislature. This combination produces proportional election results that better reflect the wishes of voters.

### KEY FEATURES OF THE NEW SYSTEM

#### Greater Voter Choice

- Voters get two votes on a single ballot – one for a local candidate and a second one for a party. (See page 7 for a sample ballot.)

#### Fairer Election Results

- Election results are proportional: The share of seats in the legislature that each party wins is roughly equal to its share of the party vote. For example, if a party receives 25% of the vote, it wins about 25% of the seats in the legislature. In Ontario’s current system, Single Member Plurality (also called “First Past the Post”), a party can win many votes, yet end up having few seats or no seats.

#### Stronger Representation

- The new system retains strong local representation through 90 local members. Local members are elected in the same way they are now. The candidate who wins the most votes represents the electoral district.
- Thirty-nine members (called “list members”) are elected province-wide through the party vote side of the ballot. These members provide all Ontarians with a new kind of representation. For example, list members will complement the work of local members on issues that may affect a region or the whole province.
- Local members and list members together make up 129 seats in the legislature. By adding a total of 22 seats,<sup>1</sup> the new system achieves proportionality and provides more representation for Ontario’s population, which has grown by about 1.4 million since the 1996 Census of Population was taken. At 129 seats, the legislature will be close to the size it was from 1987 to 1999, when it had 130 seats. Ontario will still have fewer representatives for its population than any other province or territory in Canada.

<sup>1</sup> The Ontario legislature currently has 103 seats. Beginning with the next election on October 10, 2007, there will be 107 seats. Please visit Elections Ontario’s website for more information on electoral districts: [www.electionsontario.on.ca](http://www.electionsontario.on.ca).

## HOW THE NEW SYSTEM WORKS

- Each party nominates its local candidates (as now), as well as a list of candidates for the whole province, in the order that it wants them to be elected. Before the election, parties must submit their lists, and the details of the process they used to create them, to Elections Ontario.

Elections Ontario will publish this information widely, so voters will know who is on a list before they vote for a party. Voters will be able to assess whether a party created its list in a fair and transparent way. Voters will also be able to see whether a party's list has a good balance of men and women, includes candidates from all of Ontario's regions, and reflects the diversity of Ontario's population.

- Voters vote for a local candidate and for a party. The party vote determines the share of seats a party wins in the legislature.
- If a party doesn't have enough local members elected to match its share of the party vote, it gets a "top-up" of seats in the legislature. These seats are filled by list members elected by voters across the province through the party side of the ballot. The list seats are used to compensate for lack of proportionality in the election of local members.

For example, imagine a legislature with 100 seats. If a party receives 25% of the party vote, it is entitled to about 25 seats. If it elects only 20 local members, the top 5 members from its list are elected to bring its total share of seats in the legislature up to 25%. (See page 13 for more details on how this works.)

- A party must have clear support – at least 3% of the party vote across the province – for candidates from its list to be elected to the legislature.



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

Ontario has a strong and vibrant parliamentary democracy and a long-standing electoral system that allows us to choose the people who represent us. The Ontario of today is much more diverse than it was over 200 years ago, when we began using our current system. Since then, Ontario has made some significant changes – most notably, giving all adult citizens the right to vote – but voters have continued to elect their representatives in much the same way.

Until now, Ontarians have not had the opportunity to decide whether our electoral system continues to reflect the principles or values that are important to us. The referendum that will be held on the Assembly’s recommendation for a Mixed Member Proportional system gives all Ontario voters an opportunity to do that.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A government regulation directed the Assembly to consider eight principles and any others it considered important. These principles were developed by the former Select Committee on Electoral Reform, established by the Ontario legislature in 2005 to study electoral systems. The committee was made up of MPPs from the Liberal, Progressive Conservative, and New Democratic parties. The principles are:

### **Legitimacy**

The electoral system inspires the confidence of citizens in both its process and its results.

### **Fairness of Representation**

The legislature reflects the makeup of Ontario’s population; parties hold seats in proportion to the votes they receive; and each vote carries equal weight.

### **Voter Choice**

Voters have both quantity and quality of choice on the ballot.

### **Effective Parties**

The system supports strong parties that can offer different perspectives.

### **Stable and Effective Government**

The system produces strong, stable governments.





### **Effective Parliament**

The legislature includes government and opposition parties and can perform its functions successfully.

### **Stronger Voter Participation**

The system encourages more people to vote.

### **Accountability**

Voters can identify decision-makers and hold them to account.

The Assembly thought it was important to add a ninth principle:

### **Simplicity and Practicality**

The system is practical and people can easily understand how it works.

These nine principles guided the Assembly's work from beginning to end. The Assembly used the principles to evaluate other electoral systems, and to compare them with one another and with Ontario's current system. This report highlights how we considered each principle in the design of a Mixed Member Proportional system for Ontario.

## **OBJECTIVES**

After carefully considering the principles and the extent to which each is reflected in different electoral systems, the Assembly identified three priority objectives it felt an electoral system for Ontario should achieve:

- **Voter choice:** Voters should be able to indicate both their preferred candidate and their preferred party.
- **Fair election results:** The number of seats a party wins should more closely reflect its share of the party vote.
- **Strong local representation:** Each geographic area of the province should have at least one representative.

After examining many different systems, including our current one, the Assembly concluded that a Mixed Member Proportional system, designed specifically for Ontario, does the best job of meeting the principles and these objectives.

**Voter Choice**

The Assembly believes that Ontario’s current system is limited in the choices it offers voters: The ballot allows us to mark only a single X. Many voters have been faced with the dilemma of wanting to support a local candidate but not his or her party, or wanting to support a party but not its local candidate.

A Mixed Member Proportional system allows voters to vote for a local candidate *and* for a party.

**Fair Election Results**

As the Assembly looked at past election results, it became clear that Ontario’s legislature does not reflect the way people actually voted. Rarely is a majority government elected with a majority of voter support – this has not happened since 1937.

In the current system, results are rarely proportional: A party’s share of seats in the legislature does not correspond to its share of the vote. Some parties (often larger ones) receive more than their share of seats, while other parties (often smaller ones) receive less than their share. The Assembly believes that this detracts from the fairness and legitimacy of Ontario’s electoral system.

A Mixed Member Proportional system makes election results fairer by ensuring that a party’s seat share more closely reflects its vote share.

**Strong Local Representation**

In assessing Ontario’s current electoral system, the Assembly recognized that one of its greatest strengths is that it provides strong local representation through MPPs who represent their local districts. This is important because Ontario is large and diverse and its regions have different needs.

A Mixed Member Proportional system retains strong local representation – a valued feature of Ontario’s current electoral system.

.....  
“People vote for many different reasons: for a party, for a candidate, or against a party or candidate. An electoral system should allow people to express these preferences simply.”  
– *Participant at public meeting, Barrie*  
.....

.....  
“The current system produces majorities which have 40% of the votes, 60% of the seats, 100% of the power.”  
– *Participant at public meeting, Toronto*  
.....

.....  
“In our system we vote directly for our local representative, who is someone who lives among us.”  
– *Participant at public meeting, Kitchener-Waterloo*  
.....

# HOW THE NEW SYSTEM WORKS<sup>2</sup>

## THE BALLOT

This is an example of what a Mixed Member Proportional Ballot might look like. (Elections Ontario will design the actual ballot.)

You have two votes   Vous disposez de deux votes			
X ↓ Vote Here Votez ici	<b>Party Vote</b> This vote determines what share of seats each party will receive. Vote by putting an X next to the party of your choice.  <b>Vote de parti</b> Ce vote détermine la part des sièges que recevra chaque parti. Votez en inscrivant un X à côté du parti de votre choix.	<b>Local Candidate Vote</b> This vote determines which candidate will be elected to represent your district. Vote by putting an X next to the candidate of your choice.  <b>Vote pour le candidat local</b> Ce vote détermine quel candidat sera élu pour représenter votre circonscription. Votez en mettant un X à côté du candidat de votre choix.	X ↓ Vote Here Votez ici
	Vote for only one party Votez pour un seul parti	Vote for only one candidate Votez pour un seul candidat	
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti C <span style="float: right;">C</span>	Olive, Oliver <span style="float: right;">C</span>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti E <span style="float: right;">E</span>	Tangerine, Tony <span style="float: right;">E</span>	<input type="radio"/>
	Independent/ Candidate indépendante	Turquoise, Thérèse	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti B <span style="float: right;">B</span>	Violet, Veronica <span style="float: right;">B</span>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti A <span style="float: right;">A</span>	Yellow, Yasmin <span style="float: right;">A</span>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti F <span style="float: right;">F</span>	No local candidate/ Aucun candidat local	
<input type="radio"/>	Party/Parti D <span style="float: right;">D</span>	No local candidate/ Aucun candidat local	

Candidates are ordered alphabetically on the right side, matched to their parties. This district has an independent candidate, Thérèse Turquoise, running for election. Parties F and D are not running local candidates in this district, but voters can still support these parties.

## Guiding Principle:

### *Voter Choice*

On one side of the ballot, you vote for the party you prefer. On the other side, you vote for a candidate to represent your local district. A Mixed Member Proportional ballot allows you to:

- vote for a candidate and for that candidate's party
- vote for a candidate and for a *different* party
- vote for an independent candidate if one is running in your district *and* for a party
- vote for a party even if that party does not have a candidate running in your district
- cast only one vote – either for a candidate or for a party – without spoiling your ballot.

<sup>2</sup> This section provides an overview of the new system. A more detailed, technical description is provided in the background report, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*.

## ELECTING OUR REPRESENTATIVES

In a Mixed Member Proportional system, voters elect their representatives in two ways: in local districts and province-wide. While there are two paths to the legislature, all elected members serve together as MPPs to represent Ontarians.

### Local Members

Local members are elected in the new system in the same way they are elected under the current system. Local candidates are nominated by parties or run as independents. The votes are counted in each electoral district and the candidate with the most votes is elected. The winner needs more votes than other candidates, but does not need to receive a majority (50% +1) of the votes. The winning candidate represents your district in the legislature.

### List Members

List members are elected through the party vote on the ballot. Each party nominates a province-wide list of candidates, in the order it wants them to be elected. Candidates at the top of the list have a better chance of being elected than candidates farther down the list. This helps voters decide which party to vote for because they know which candidates will be elected if a party wins list seats.

### *Transparent process for lists*

Before the election, parties will be required to submit their lists, as well as the details of the *process* they used to nominate their list candidates, to Elections Ontario – a non-partisan body. Elections Ontario will publish this information widely. Voters will be able to assess whether parties created their lists in a fair and transparent way. Voters will also be able to see whether a party's list has a good balance of men and women, includes candidates from all of Ontario's regions, and reflects the diversity of Ontario's population. In order to attract support from voters across the province, parties have an incentive to ensure that their lists are representative of the people of Ontario.

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### Guiding Principle:

#### *Simplicity and Practicality*

The Assembly wanted any new electoral system for Ontario to be easy to understand and practical to implement. Giving voters two votes on a single ballot is a simple and practical way to increase voter choice and achieve fairer election results, without changing the way local members are elected.

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### Guiding Principle:

#### *Accountability*

The new system provides two kinds of accountability: At election time, voters can hold their local representatives accountable *and* hold parties accountable by directly determining the share of seats each party wins. Requiring parties to disclose to voters how they created their lists and who is on them strengthens accountability.

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### *Clear provincial support*

In the Mixed Member Proportional system, a party must have clear support – at least 3% of the party vote across the province – for candidates from its list to be elected to the legislature. For example, in the last Ontario election, approximately 4.5 million people voted. To meet the 3% threshold of support, a party would have needed about 135,000 votes.

The 3% threshold of support strikes a balance between having more parties represented in the legislature and preventing parties with very little public support from winning seats. The threshold for electing list members ensures that all parties allocated list seats will have strong enough support from voters.

Any party can win a local seat if its candidate attracts more votes than any other candidate in a local district.

### **STRONGER REPRESENTATION**

As in the current system, all MPPs serve the local needs of citizens, and may also focus on particular areas of interest to their parties or to the people of Ontario. List members will complement the work of local members on issues that may affect a region or the whole province, for example, the Northern economy, transportation in the Greater Toronto Area, or the environment. The experience in countries with Mixed Member Proportional systems shows that many list members have strong connections to specific communities or regions.

List members will also bring new perspectives into the legislature. The Assembly's recommendations for creating lists in a transparent way will help ensure that list members represent all of Ontario's regions and include more women and other citizens currently underrepresented in the legislature. In addition, many list members will come from smaller parties that often don't win local seats in competition with bigger parties.

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### Guiding Principle:

#### *Effective Parties*

Political parties play an essential role in our political system. They develop policy, promote public debate, and bring together people who support them. A Mixed Member Proportional system maintains this role, and it adds a new way for voters to support parties directly through the party vote. It gives a voice in the legislature to parties that have significant support province-wide but do not win local seats.

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### Guiding Principle:

#### *Fairness of Representation*

The principle that the legislature should better reflect the makeup of Ontario's diverse population affected many of the Assembly's decisions, such as having province-wide lists and requiring parties to disclose to voters how they created their lists and who is on them. The Assembly recognizes that the electoral system cannot, on its own, create a more diverse legislature. However, a Mixed Member Proportional system is more likely than Ontario's current system to increase the participation of women and other underrepresented citizens in the legislature. This has been the experience in countries that have adopted similar electoral systems.

**THE LEGISLATURE**

For the Assembly, a major challenge in designing the new system was balancing the objectives of retaining strong local representation (through local members) and achieving proportionality (by adding list members). We believe that our recommendation achieves the right balance for Ontario.

In the new system, there will be 90 local members (70% of the legislature) and 39 list members (30% of the legislature). We chose this ratio to ensure strong local representation. Other countries with Mixed Member Proportional systems have lower percentages of local members.<sup>3</sup>

The number of local members will be reduced from 107 to 90 to allow for the addition of list members. While each electoral district will have more constituents, citizens will gain representation *overall* through the combination of local and list members.

Local members and list members together will make up 129 seats in the legislature. By adding a total of 22 seats, the new system achieves proportionality and provides more representation for Ontario’s population. The province today has about 1.4 million more people than it did when the 1996 Census of Population was taken. At 129 seats, the legislature will be close to the size it was from 1987 to 1999, when it had 130 seats. Ontario will still have fewer representatives for its population than any other province or territory in Canada.

For the 1999 Ontario election, the number of seats in the legislature was reduced from 130 to 103 (or by 21%). The number of seats was decreased only one other time in Ontario’s history, in the 1934 election. In the future, if a government increases the size of the legislature to reflect population growth, it is important that list members continue to make up at least 30% of the total number of seats in order to ensure proportionality.

This table shows how many people, on average, each member represents in provincial and territorial legislatures in Canada.

Province/Territory	Number of Seats	Population per Member
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>113,647</b>
	(seats for 2007 election)	
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>94,266</b>
	(seats recommended by Assembly)	
Quebec	125	60,369
British Columbia	79	52,069
Alberta	83	39,643
Manitoba	57	20,147
Nova Scotia	52	17,567
Saskatchewan	58	16,692
New Brunswick	55	13,273
Newfoundland & Labrador	48	10,531
Prince Edward Island	27	5,032
Northwest Territories	14	2,962
Yukon	18	1,687
Nunavut	19	1,551

Sources: Population data from Statistics Canada, “Population and Dwelling Counts, for Canada provinces and territories, 2006.” Seat totals from provincial and territorial elections offices.

<sup>3</sup> In Germany, local members account for 50% of the legislature; in Scotland, 57%; in New Zealand, 58%; and in Wales, 67%.

## THE GOVERNMENT

The new system reflects the belief that a party should only be able to form a *single-party majority government* when it receives a majority, or close to a majority, of the votes. When no party wins a majority of votes in the election, the party that wins the most seats can form a *single-party minority government*. Minority governments can function with the informal or formal support of other parties in the legislature. In the current system, minority governments tend to govern for a time, with a focus on achieving majority status at the next election. In countries with Mixed Member Proportional systems, parties know that it is rare for a single party to form a majority government on its own, so parties are more likely to share power and govern through coalitions.

In Mixed Member Proportional systems, *coalition majority governments* are the most common. These are governments made up of two or more parties that together have a majority of seats. These governments are generally stable and effective: They are able to carry out the business of government, make decisions, get bills passed, and address voters' needs.

Coalition majority governments may actually enhance stability by discouraging abrupt shifts in policy that can occur in the current system when the government changes from one party to another – neither of which was elected with a majority of support from voters.

The stability of governments is also measured by whether governments can serve their full term in office. Looking at Mixed Member Proportional countries, early elections tend to be no more frequent than in our current system. For example, Ontario has had 16 elections since 1948; Germany has had 16 elections since 1949.

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### Guiding Principle: *Stable and Effective Government*

The Assembly is confident that a Mixed Member Proportional system will continue to provide stable and effective government, but the nature of government in Ontario will likely change. The Assembly recognizes that parties will need to adjust to the new political environment, but we are reassured by the experiences of other countries that have gone through similar changes.

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### Guiding Principle: *Effective Parliament*

The likelihood of coalitions in a Mixed Member Proportional system may make the environment in the legislature less adversarial than it is now. Parties within a coalition government will need to work together to manage the affairs of the province effectively. The experience in New Zealand suggests that parties must compromise and negotiate more because no party can expect to govern on its own. This allows all-party committees of the legislature to play an important role in contributing to government policy.

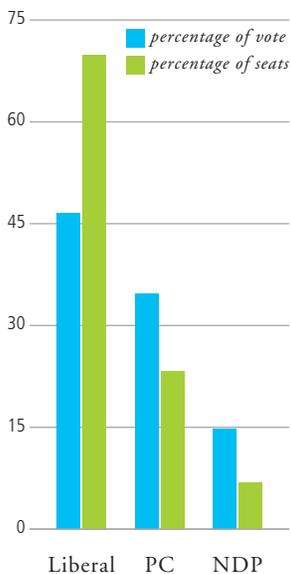
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## RESULTS UNDER ONTARIO'S CURRENT SYSTEM

Under Ontario's current Single Member Plurality system, a party can win many votes, yet end up having few seats or no seats. Voters have only one vote and there can be only one winner in each electoral district.

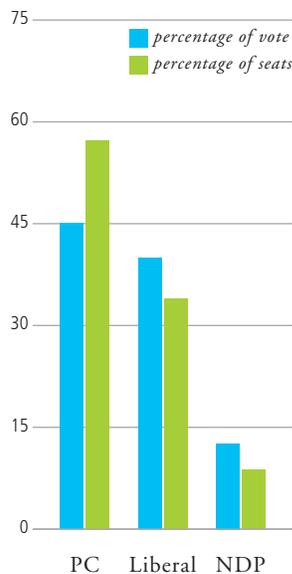
The charts below show the results for the last four Ontario elections. By comparing each party's percentage of the vote to the percentage of seats it won, you can see the lack of proportionality under the current system. In each election, the winning party received a share of seats greater than its share of votes. The winning party is usually overcompensated when votes are translated into seats. If one party is overcompensated, then other parties are under-compensated. In the last four elections, the second and third place parties received fewer seats than their share of votes.

**Ontario General Election 2003 (103 Seats)**



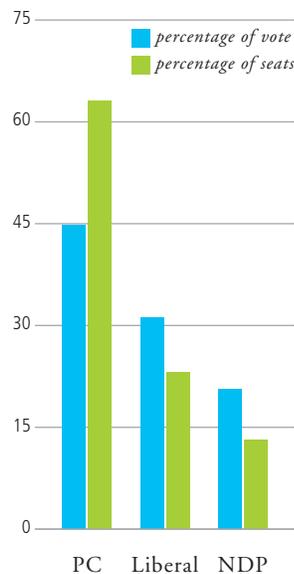
Of the three parties that won seats, the Liberals won 69.9% of the seats with 46.5% of the vote; the Progressive Conservatives won 23.3% of the seats with 34.7% of the vote; and the NDP won 6.8% of the seats with 14.7% of the vote.

**Ontario General Election 1999 (103 Seats)**



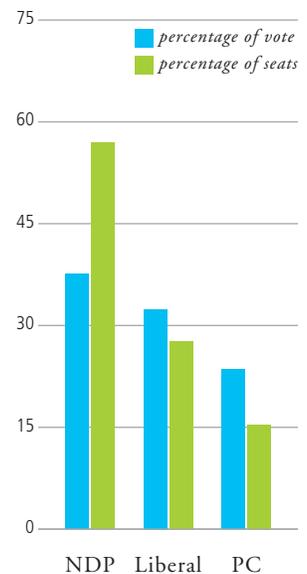
The Progressive Conservatives won 57.3% of the seats with 45.1% of the vote; the Liberals won 34.0% of the seats with 39.9% of the vote; and the NDP won 8.7% of the seats with 12.6% of the vote.

**Ontario General Election 1995 (130 Seats)**



The Progressive Conservatives won 63.1% of the seats with 44.8% of the vote; the Liberals won 23.1% of the seats with 31.1% of the vote; and the NDP won 13.1% of the seats with 20.6% of the vote.

**Ontario General Election 1990 (130 Seats)**



The NDP won 56.9% of the seats with 37.6% of the vote; the Liberals won 27.7% of the seats with 32.4% of the vote; and the Progressive Conservatives won 15.4% of the seats with 23.5% of the vote.

PC = Progressive Conservative, NDP = New Democratic Party

**RESULTS UNDER A MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM**

In a Mixed Member Proportional system, the share of seats a party wins closely reflects its share of the party vote. Parties keep all the local seats they win, even if they win more local seats than their share of the party vote gives them.

If parties don't have enough local members elected to match their share of the vote, they get a "top-up" of seats in the legislature. These seats are filled by list members elected by voters across the province through their party votes. The list seats are used to compensate for the lack of proportionality in the election of local members.

The table below shows how this is done.

Party A received 45% of the party vote and should therefore receive about 45% of the seats in the legislature. In this example, it won 42% of the seats through the election of local members, so it is compensated with enough seats for list members elected province-wide to bring its total representation in the legislature up to 45%.

Party B received 30% of the party vote but won 23% of the seats locally. It is compensated with list seats to reflect its share of the party vote.

Party C received 16% of the party vote but won 5% of the seats locally. It is compensated with list seats to reflect its share of the party vote.

Party D received 7% of the party vote, but did not elect any local members. Its representation in the legislature comprises only list members.

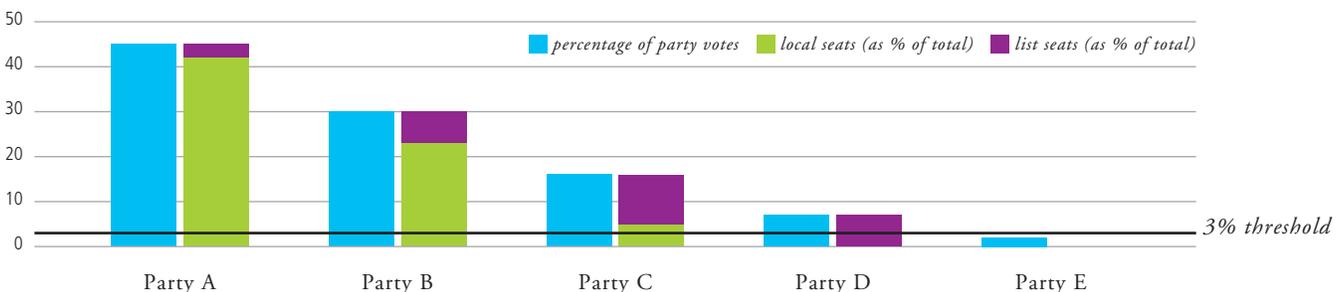
Party E received 2% of the party vote and did not elect any local members. Because its percentage of the party vote was below the 3% threshold, it does not qualify for list seats.

Guiding Principle:

*Legitimacy*

Ultimately, it is up to voters to decide whether a Mixed Member Proportional system is a legitimate choice for the province and whether it better reflects the values of Ontario than our current system does. The system we have designed retains the strong link with local members that Ontarians value. It also gives voters more choice and will produce fairer election results. These features of the new system, coupled with our belief that it will produce stable and effective governments, led the Assembly to recommend a Mixed Member Proportional system to the people of Ontario.

**Compensation for lack of Proportionality**



# RECOMMENDATIONS ON RELATED ISSUES

The Assembly wishes to highlight three additional issues that were frequently raised by the members of the public who participated in the public consultations: voter participation, the nomination of local candidates, and the upcoming referendum.

## VOTER PARTICIPATION

The Assembly recommends that the government and other organizations work together to:

- Build public understanding of the importance of elections, the broader political process, and the ways in which all citizens can participate in this process.
- Ensure that all Ontario high school students graduate with a good working knowledge of our democratic system and understand the importance of voting. Also, provide opportunities to engage youth and young voters in the political process. The Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform was conducted in the fall of 2006 to involve high school students from across Ontario. It showed us the power of innovative and youth-centred approaches to getting young people interested in and excited about the political process.
- Continue the process of removing the barriers that prevent people from participating fully in elections and in the political process more generally. Accessibility for people with disabilities and for those who face language, literacy, and other barriers must be a central consideration in all efforts to increase voter participation. The Assembly recommends that the public education campaign leading up to the referendum, the method of carrying out the referendum, and voting procedures under the new electoral system (should it be approved by voters) be fully accessible to all Ontario citizens.

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### Guiding Principle:

#### *Stronger Voter Participation*

Many members of the public who participated in the consultations stressed the importance of stronger voter participation. The Assembly found that no electoral system by itself can have an appreciable impact on voter turnout. The Assembly encourages the government to consider other factors, which, together with a new electoral system, could improve voter participation and strengthen our democracy.

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.....  
"We should educate young people about politics from an early age. The only way to have a good electorate is to have an educated citizenry."

– Participant at public meeting, Toronto

.....  
"My hope is that young people will feel the need to participate in democracy and understand the importance of their choices."

– Students' Assembly member

.....  
"If casting one's vote is indeed the most important act a citizen performs in any democracy, then it is time for the process to become more inclusive for all citizens."

– Excerpt from the written submission of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

## NOMINATION OF LOCAL CANDIDATES

The Assembly's proposal for a Mixed Member Proportional system includes the recommendation that list candidates and the process parties use to nominate them should be well known to voters before they vote. The Assembly did not make a recommendation to change the process by which parties nominate their local candidates. However, the Assembly believes that the same type of transparency, with attention to achieving greater gender balance and reflecting Ontario's diverse population, should apply to local candidate nominations. This would contribute to the legitimacy of the electoral system and citizens' confidence in the political process.

## THE REFERENDUM

On our next provincial election day, October 10, 2007, a referendum will be held to ask Ontario voters whether they support the Assembly's recommendation for a Mixed Member Proportional system for Ontario. The government has set a double threshold for approval of the recommendation: It must win at least 60% of voter support across the province, and it must be approved by a majority of voters in at least 60% of electoral districts.

The Assembly is pleased that the referendum law (*Electoral System Referendum Act, 2007*) directs that the wording of the question be "clear, concise and impartial." The Assembly believes that a simple yes/no question would be clearest and that the question should inform voters that the recommendation for the new system was made by the Citizens' Assembly. We believe the question should ask the voters whether Ontario should adopt the Mixed Member Proportional electoral system recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

The Assembly feels that all citizens must be well informed about the referendum and have a good understanding of the new system. A comprehensive, well-funded public education program, beginning in May and continuing through to the referendum, is vital. We believe that the program should include a description of the new system and how it differs from the current system; a description of the Citizens' Assembly process; and the Assembly's rationale for recommending a Mixed Member Proportional system for Ontario.

.....  
"I feel any changes will only work if there is a strong, broad-based and clear public education campaign to accompany the implementation of such changes. Voters need to know: why the changes are being proposed; what the benefits and risks are; and how to use their vote most effectively to represent their interests."

– *Written submission to the Citizens' Assembly*  
.....

# ABOUT THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

## MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Except for the Chair, George Thomson, the 104 members of the Assembly were selected at random by Elections Ontario from the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario. Every registered voter was eligible to participate (with a few exceptions, such as elected officials). This section provides some facts and figures about the people who made up the Assembly.

### Gender

52 women and 52 men

### Age

18 to 24: 11    25 to 39: 23    40 to 54: 32    55 to 70: 26    70+: 12

With only slight variations, the Assembly reflects the age demographics of Ontario.

### Place of birth

Ontario: 66    Other provinces: 11    Outside Canada: 27

Countries of birth: Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Iraq, Korea, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Serbia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

### Language

The members speak a combined total of 28 languages: English, French, Arabic, Aramaic, Bengali, Cantonese, Dutch, Fanti, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Ibo, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Maltese, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Ukrainian, and Urdu.

### Occupation

The members have a wide variety of current and past occupations, including: educators, students, small business owners, editors, public servants, healthcare workers, financial sector workers, information technology specialists, artists, customer service representatives, engineers, and skilled trades workers.





## THE ASSEMBLY PROCESS

The Assembly carried out its work from September 2006 through April 2007.

The Assembly's Chair was George Thomson, an educator and former judge and deputy minister. Mr. Thomson facilitated the Assembly process, but remained neutral and did not vote on any of our decisions. He also headed up the Citizens' Assembly Secretariat that supported the Assembly's work.

The Assembly's Academic Director was Dr. Jonathan Rose, associate professor of political science at Queen's University. He developed an intensive learning program on electoral systems, which presented us with many different perspectives. He too was neutral throughout the process.

This section briefly describes the three main phases of our work. Detailed information on the Assembly process and the role of the Citizens' Assembly Secretariat is available in the background report, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*.

### Learning Phase

From September 2006 through November 2006, the Assembly met for six weekends to learn about Ontario's electoral system and other systems used in the world. The learning program included lectures, reading, our own research, election simulations, small group work, plenary discussions, evening drop-ins, videos of interviews with parliamentarians from other countries, and the opportunity to meet and question former Ontario politicians and national and international experts on electoral systems.



### Consultation Phase

From October 2006 through January 2007, Assembly members undertook public consultations to inform our deliberations. The consultation process included three main opportunities for input: 41 public meetings across the province, an invitation to make written submissions, and special outreach sessions organized by the Social Planning Network of Ontario on behalf of the Assembly. In addition, many Assembly members undertook outreach in their own communities. Altogether, about 3,000 people shared their views with the Assembly.

### Deliberation Phase

From February 2007 through April 2007, the Assembly met for another six weekends to review what members had learned and to discuss the views heard in the consultations. In this phase, the Assembly revisited the principles and identified three priority objectives for Ontario's electoral system; then, the members assessed all of the major electoral systems against these objectives.

The Assembly chose two electoral systems to design in detail: Mixed Member Proportional and Single Transferable Vote seemed to have the best chance of meeting the three objectives. To compare the alternatives with each other and with Ontario's current system, the Assembly developed detailed models of the two alternative systems.

The Assembly held three formal votes by secret ballot. In the final one, the Assembly decided to recommend its Mixed Member Proportional system to the people of Ontario.

The final task of the Assembly was to prepare and approve this report.

### Vote Results

#### Vote 1 – April 1, 2007

*What is the best alternative system for Ontario: Mixed Member Proportional or Single Transferable Vote?*

- 75 for Mixed Member Proportional
- 25 for Single Transferable Vote
- 1 spoiled ballot

Total votes = 101 (2 members absent)

#### Vote 2 – April 14, 2007

*Should Ontario keep its current electoral system or adopt the Assembly's Mixed Member Proportional system?*

- 16 for current system
- 86 for Mixed Member Proportional

Total votes = 102 (1 member absent)

#### Vote 3 – April 15, 2007

*Do you want to recommend the Assembly's Mixed Member Proportional system to the people of Ontario?*

- 94 yes
- 8 no

Total votes = 102 (1 member absent)

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This section provides answers to some key questions about how a Mixed Member Proportional system would work in Ontario. These are questions that Assembly members thought about as we designed and discussed the system.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### Why do I get two votes?

The first vote on the ballot allows you to choose a party. This vote determines the total share of seats each party gets in the legislature. The second vote allows you to choose an individual member to represent your local district. Together, the two votes give you strong local representation and produce fairer election results.

### What other countries use a Mixed Member Proportional system?

Germany has used the system since 1949. In 1993, New Zealanders voted in a referendum to change their electoral system from Single Member Plurality (Ontario's current system) to a Mixed Member Proportional system. Its first election using the new system was in 1996. In the United Kingdom, Scotland and Wales have both used a Mixed Member Proportional system since 1999.

### Who asked that Ontario's electoral system be reviewed?

In 2005, the Ontario legislature established an all-party committee to study electoral systems. The committee made recommendations regarding the Citizens' Assembly and the referendum. In March 2006, the government filed a regulation providing for Elections Ontario to select one citizen at random from each of Ontario's 103 electoral districts to form the Citizens' Assembly.



## ABOUT REPRESENTATION

### **Which member will I contact if I have concerns – my local member or a list member?**

You'll have the option of contacting the local member for your district or any of the list members for the province. You can choose to contact a list member from a particular party, or one who is knowledgeable about your region or about a specific issue that interests you.

### **Will Ontario citizens have less representation under the new system?**

Citizens will gain representation overall through the combination of 90 local members and 39 list members. If you divide the number of Ontarians by 129 representatives, it works out to about 19,000 fewer citizens per representative compared with the current system at 107 seats.

### **How will the new system affect Ontario's regions, such as Northern and rural areas?**

Regional interests will be represented through the 90 local seats *and* through list members. Parties will have an incentive to include candidates from all regions on their lists in order to attract wide support. In countries with Mixed Member Proportional systems, list members provide additional voices in the legislature for the needs and interests of particular regions. They also provide a voice on issues that are important to all citizens, no matter where they live.

### **How will the new system affect representation by population?**

Representation by population is a legal requirement that each local member represent roughly the same number of voters. In Canada, some variations are permitted to reflect the great variation in population density between urban areas and large Northern areas. The new system does not affect representation by population as it exists in the province today.



## ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

### **How are list members accountable to the voters?**

Like local members, list members are accountable to the voters. They are elected through the party vote. If voters are unhappy with a party's performance or its list members, they can withdraw their support for that party in the next election.

### **Do lists give parties too much power?**

In the current system, parties nominate their local candidates. In the new system, they will also nominate candidates to their party lists. It is the voters who will decide, through their two votes, which local candidates are elected and how many candidates are elected from each party's list. The requirements for publishing party lists will allow voters to know who is on a list and in what order, and whether a list was created in a fair and transparent way, before they vote.



## OTHER DESIGN FEATURES

For more information on the design features of the new system, see the background report, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*.

### **Can the same candidate run in a local district and be on a party list?**

Candidates can run in a local district, be on a party list, or both. If candidates seek election in both ways and win a local race, their names would be crossed off the list. Only one candidate can win in a local district, but others may have strong support from voters. Being on the list gives these candidates a chance to be elected and serve Ontarians. There will also be cases where a party wishes to nominate someone only to its list – for example, a finance expert or environmentalist – who can make an important contribution to the province.

**What if parties win more local seats than their share of the party vote gives them?**

Parties always keep the local seats they win, even if they win more seats than their share of the party vote gives them. This has no effect on the size of the legislature and, in almost all cases, still achieves good proportionality.

**Why does a party need 3% support to win a list seat?**

If a party wins at least 3% of the party vote, it will have strong enough support from voters to be entitled to have a voice in the legislature. It is not possible to predict with certainty how Ontarians will vote under the new electoral system. However, based on past voting patterns in Ontario and the experience in Mixed Member Proportional countries, the Assembly believes that this threshold will ensure that the legislature continues to function effectively.

**How are seats allocated to parties?**

Mixed Member Proportional systems use formulas to allocate seats to parties. The Assembly chose the simplest formula (called the “Hare formula”). It divides the total number of party votes by the total number of seats in the legislature. The result of this calculation determines the number of seats to be allocated to each party.

**What happens if a list seat becomes vacant between elections?**

If one of a party’s list seats becomes vacant between elections for any reason, the vacancy is filled by the next available person on that party’s list as submitted for the previous election. A by-election is not needed. By-elections will still be held for local seats that become vacant.



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAIR

The Citizens' Assembly successfully modeled a new kind of democratic decision-making unprecedented in Ontario. It demonstrated the value of involving citizens in important policy questions. I was privileged to witness the extraordinary capacity of citizens when given the chance to contribute so directly to the democratic process.

The Assembly brought together 103 randomly selected Ontario citizens to learn, consult with their fellow Ontarians, deliberate, and come to a decision on an electoral system for Ontario. The Assembly was guaranteed its independence from government, and direct access to Ontario voters through a referendum if it decided to recommend change.

As Chair, my responsibility was to lead a process that would give Assembly members the tools and support they would need to come to a well-informed decision. And, just as important, my role was to facilitate a neutral and transparent process that would inspire the confidence of members and the public in how the Assembly reached that decision.

The Assembly members constantly amazed me with their enthusiasm and deep commitment to the task they were given. Throughout the eight-month process, not one member withdrew from the Assembly. Members applied themselves to learning about electoral systems. They talked to people in their communities about the work of the Assembly and chaired public consultation meetings. Some members read hundreds of written submissions. Others participated on working groups to advise on the Assembly process or to do more research in specific areas. Many used an online forum to share information and discuss issues between meetings.

By the time the Assembly began its deliberations in February, it had become a community of people who cared about one another and never lost sight of their common objective: choosing the best electoral system for Ontario. Assembly members approached their deliberations with open minds, respect for different points of view, and in the spirit of the best kind of collective problem-solving. They inspired the members of the public who came to see them at work, and they inspired me.

The Assembly members often expressed their gratitude for the support they received from the Citizens' Assembly Secretariat staff, the learning team, and so many other organizations and individuals who provided advice and participated in the process. My space in this report isn't nearly enough to thank everyone adequately.



The Secretariat was a talented and dedicated team. Staff worked tirelessly to provide members with whatever they needed to get the job done. Our Academic Director, Dr. Jonathan Rose, headed up the learning program. He recruited small-group facilitators who played a vital role working with the members, and assembled a group of external electoral system experts who provided ongoing feedback and advice.

On behalf of the Assembly, I want to thank the government for creating the Assembly and for respecting its independence. We are also grateful to the former Select Committee on Electoral Reform, which developed eight of the principles that guided the Assembly's work, and to Elections Ontario, which created and led the selection process for Assembly members.

The Assembly worked with many others to ensure that its process was transparent and that it engaged as many people as possible in the discussion. Our thanks to TVOntario, Seneca College, Osgoode Hall Law School of York University, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, and to many others, too numerous to mention here but greatly appreciated.

Members of the Assembly are especially grateful to the citizens who came to observe their weekend meetings, participated in the consultation meetings, or put time and effort into written submissions. All of them enriched the discussion of electoral systems and the principles that underlie them.

Now, I encourage all Ontario citizens to participate in the discussion and, on the day of the referendum, to be heard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Thomson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

George Thomson

# SUMMARY OF THE MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends to the government and people of Ontario that the province adopt a Mixed Member Proportional electoral system. The following elements are part of the new system which voters will be asked to vote on in the referendum:

- Voters get two votes on a single ballot: one for a local candidate and one for a party.
- The party vote determines the total share of seats a party wins in the legislature. If a party doesn't have enough local members elected to match its share of the party vote, it is compensated with list seats. These seats are filled by members from a party list who are elected by voters province-wide through the party vote.
- Local members continue to be elected as they are now.
- The Ontario legislature is made up of 90 members elected locally (70% of the legislature) and 39 list members elected province-wide (30% of the legislature) for a total of 129 members.
- Each party nominates a list of candidates for the whole province, and candidates are elected in the order in which they appear on the list.
- Before the election, parties are required to submit their lists, as well as the details of the process they used to nominate their list candidates, to Elections Ontario. Elections Ontario will publish this information widely.
- Candidates may run in a local district, be on a party list, or both.
- A party is required to have a minimum of 3% of the party vote across the province in order for candidates from its list to be elected.
- Seats are allocated to parties using a formula (the "Hare formula") that divides the total number of party votes by the total number of seats in the legislature.
- If one of a party's list seats becomes vacant between elections for any reason, the vacancy is filled by the next available person on that party's list as submitted for the previous election.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the Citizens' Assembly website [www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca) for more information on the Mixed Member Proportional system including an animation; additional resources about electoral systems; the presentations from the Assembly's Learning and Deliberation Phases; and the reports on the public consultations.

Also posted on the website is a background report, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*, which provides detailed information on the Assembly process, weekend-by-weekend descriptions of the Assembly's activities, and a technical description of the new system.

Copies of this report and the background report are available at ServiceOntario/Government Information Centres in more than 50 communities around the province. For the location nearest you, please visit [www.serviceontario.ca](http://www.serviceontario.ca) or call the Citizens' Inquiry Bureau at 416-326-1234, toll free at 1-800-267-8097, TTY at 416-325-3408.

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**A Mixed Member Proportional electoral system for Ontario will provide**

**GREATER VOTER CHOICE | FAIRER ELECTION RESULTS | STRONGER REPRESENTATION**

*[www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca)*