

Electoral system to face vote

Referendum to determine whether or not to adopt plan

TORONTO (CP) — Ontario voters will decide in the October election whether to adopt a revamped electoral system that advocates say will give the province a more co-operative government and could prompt electoral change across the country.

A citizens' assembly, appointed by the government last year, overwhelmingly decided yesterday that the referendum question put to voters in the Oct. 10 election should ask whether they want to adopt the system used in

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Germany and New Zealand called "mixed member proportional."

"We felt the number of seats a party wins should more reflect the popular vote that they received," said Mayte Darraidou, an assembly member from

Toronto.

"We felt that Ontario had been through several governments where they received a majority of the seats but did not receive a majority of the votes. We wanted to change that."

Under the proposed system, voters would have two choices on a ballot — one for a local representative and another for a political party.

The number of seats in the legislature would swell from 103 to 129 — 90 politicians would be elected in enlarged ridings across the province using the current first-past-the-post system and another 39 would be appointed by parties from a public list of candidates according to the percentage of popular vote they received.

The mixed member system means traditional fringe parties like the Green Party that get more than 3 per cent of the vote — but not enough to elect candidates in ridings — would

have a better chance of having at least one seat in the legislature.

If Ontario voters decided to adopt the system, the province would likely have fewer single-party majority governments but would rather encourage parties to create majorities through coalitions.

It will give us "a more co-operative government," said Pat Miller, a Toronto-area member of the assembly.

"It's a government with some continuity between elections that will save some of the waste that there's been when we've seen rapid change from one government to another," she said.

The 103-member assembly endorsed the system 94 votes to 8 with one member absent. Edmund James, one of the few members who voted to stick with the status quo, said more work should be done to empower backbenchers rather than tinkering with how they are elected.

