

# Electoral reform could give fringe parties voice at Queen's Park

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**A**nti-abortion activists and environmentalists could end up with at least one seat in the Ontario legislature and constituency service could suffer under new proposed electoral reforms, a political analyst said Monday.

But David Docherty, dean of arts at Wilfrid Laurier University, said that's the price of a more accountable government that better reflects the political leanings of Ontario voters.

Ontario voters will decide in October's election whether to adopt the new electoral system of mixed member representation which would enlarge current electoral ridings but leave a pool of politicians that would be appointed according to the party's percentage of popular vote.

That system could mean traditional fringe parties like the Green Party and the Family Coalition Party could get several seats in the legis-

lature, Docherty said.

"Some of the voices we elect, some of us might not always want to hear but if 4 per cent of the population votes for an anti-abortion party, maybe they should have a seat in the assembly," he said.

"Will it change things dramatically? No, probably not. Just as if the Greens get two seats — will it change things dramatically? No, but at least they'll have a voice there."

The proposed system would increase the number of legislature seats 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.

Although there would be more politicians in the legislature, Docherty said larger ridings would likely cause constituency service to suffer, but there would be a

greater variety of critical voices in the legislature to hold the government to account.

A citizens assembly determined over the weekend that Ontario voters would choose between this new system and the status quo when they vote in a referendum in the October election.

## 'BEST OF BOTH WORLDS'

It's being hailed by smaller parties that have been shut out of the legislature up until now.

"They've chosen the best of both worlds," said Ontario Green Party Leader Frank de Jong, adding the new system would likely earn the Green Party several seats in the legislature.

"(The current system) is disenfranchising far too many voters if hundreds of thousands of voters don't get a chance to be represented. That's just plain wrong."

Giuseppe Gori, leader of the Family Coalition Party of Ontario, said people are discouraged from voting for party's like his under the current system.

