



Deliberation Plan

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Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Deliberation Plan

Introduction

Objective

The Citizens' Assembly needs a fair, credible and transparent process for making informed decisions.

Mandate for Deliberation

The Assembly must decide whether to recommend that Ontario keep its current electoral system or adopt a new one. If the Assembly recommends a new system, it must provide details. The final report is due May 15, 2007. This plan sets out how we plan to meet the challenges of this task. The plan was prepared by the Chair in consultation with the learning team and Assembly members on the Deliberation Plan Advisory Committee.

What is Deliberation?

Deliberation is the process of considering different points of view and coming to reasonable, well informed decisions. It involves collective problem-solving among individuals with different backgrounds, interests and values. Rather than advocating fixed positions and seeking to win the debate, participants are willing to revise their preferences in light of new information, ideas and opinions expressed by fellow participants. The goal of deliberation is to pursue shared interests and to achieve a legitimate, public-spirited outcome.

Features of Deliberation Phase

The deliberation phase should have the following features:

- The deliberation plan – and the way we implement it – should reflect our shared values for working together and our key success factors.¹
- The process should be transparent to the public without interfering with the members' ability to deliberate effectively.
- This should be a values-driven exercise in which we move from principles² to systems and understand the trade-offs and implications of our choices.

¹ Shared values are attached as Appendix A. Key success factors are attached as Appendix B.

² Principles appear in Appendix C.

- The Assembly must have ownership of its decision. Neutrality of the Chair, academic director, facilitators and staff is essential.
- We will be open to revisiting and revising the deliberation plan as we go while keeping our focus on completing the report by May 15, 2007.

Strategies for deliberation

Preparing to Deliberate

Discuss and approve deliberation plan

Before the first deliberation meeting, the Chair will discuss the plan with the Deliberation Planning Advisory Committee and circulate it to all members for review. In an open forum at the first meeting, the Assembly will discuss, refine and approve the deliberation plan [**Decision #1**]. This will help to ensure that the Assembly as a whole feels comfortable with the proposed approach.

Learn about Ontario context

In order to make decisions that will work for Ontario, the Assembly needs access to data on Ontario – past, present, and projections for the future. We will hear from Ivan Fellegi, Chief Statistician from Statistics Canada, to present Ontario trends, statistics and projections, with an emphasis on issues of most relevance to the Assembly, e.g. population shifts, demographics, urban/rural split.

Review what we heard in public consultation

The consultation process generated many ideas and perspectives from interested members of the public. While the Assembly's decisions are independent, the public input provides valuable 'food for thought'. So before we make decisions about principles or electoral systems, we should have a common understanding about what we heard.

This will be challenging due to time pressures and the fact that we have attended different meetings and read varying numbers of submissions and meeting summaries. To make this task easier, the Secretariat will prepare a summary of themes from all sources of consultation and will put together a DVD of notable presentations identified by members. We will also invite a delegation from the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform to make a presentation in order to give voice to the large number of young people involved in that process.

Identifying Key Objectives / Reflecting on Current System

Rather than simply ranking the principles, we will consider concrete objectives that flow from the principles to help us think about what we want to achieve in an electoral system for Ontario. We will discuss these objectives and decide which ones are most important to us, and which ones we would be willing to trade for others [**Decision #2**]. The objectives will then help us decide which alternative system or systems we want

to explore in detail. They will also help as we go through the design process. This exercise will not result in any principles dropping off the table. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current system in meeting our key objectives. This will be important to keep in mind when selecting and designing alternative systems. A decision on whether to retain the current system will not be made until after there is a 'best alternative' to which it can be compared.

Designing Alternative Models

Selecting systems to design in detail

We will discuss how well alternative systems meet – or do not meet – our key objectives. Then we will rank the systems based on that analysis. This ranking will help us to decide on an alternative system to design in detail the following weekend **[Decision #3]** and begin to discuss a possible other system to design.

Design work

In theory, a system may appear attractive, but without details it is not possible to assess how well it meets our objectives. Therefore, we will devote considerable time and attention to fleshing out the details before selecting the best alternative.

To make this task more manageable, the learning team will help us to identify basic structural and other design decision points for each alternative system under consideration. They will also summarize models used in other jurisdictions or proposed during consultation.

We will ensure that our designs reflect an Ontario-specific context and we may conduct simulations or create election scenarios. However, we will not try to assess in specific terms what the results of previous Ontario elections would have been under these systems. Because the voting patterns would have been much different, the results would not be meaningful.

In designing systems, we will consider issues raised by our working groups [geographic representation; under-represented groups; parties; stable government] and issues raised in consultation such as size of the legislature.

Once we have designed a working model for the alternative system **[Decision 4]**, we will decide whether to design a second alternative system and, if so, which one.

[Decision 5]. If we choose to design a second system, we will create a working model of that system **[Decision 6]**. We will build in time for further reflection before finalizing the design of either system **[Decision 7]**.

Decide on best alternative

If two systems have been designed, we will weigh their relative merits and decide which is the best alternative system for Ontario **[Decision #8]**.

Assembly Recommendation

In comparing the current system with the best alternative, and choosing between them **[Decision #9]**, we will focus on the principle of legitimacy and the key objectives we identified. This decision will take into account whether it is worth moving to the new system in light of the challenges of making the transition, and possible measures to

ease the transition. We may also consider feedback from Elections Ontario on implementation issues.

If we choose the best alternative over the current system, we will then decide whether to recommend that system to the people of Ontario [**Decision #10**]. This provides a final opportunity for the Assembly as a whole to endorse the recommended system as a good result produced by a fair deliberative process.

Assembly Report

The Assembly's report is due May 15, 2007 in English and French. Its recommendation must be provided "in detail" if a new system is recommended. In addition, the Secretariat has begun to prepare a longer, background report to document the Citizens' Assembly process.

The Final Report Advisory Committee will propose a process for preparing and approving the final report [**Decision #11**] and reviewing the background report. The final report will set out the Assembly's recommendation and rationale. The background report will be a much lengthier document describing the Assembly process in detail. Due to the limited time available, we have begun writing the background report. We will begin drafting sections of the final report as early as possible (e.g. introductory, background sections). For sections of the report that depend on knowing the Assembly's final recommendation, we may prepare alternative versions, making changes as we go to reflect the Assembly's actual decisions.

Ancillary issues

We will discuss whether there are any ancillary issues on which the Assembly wishes to comment in the final report, e.g. public education leading to a referendum (should there be one), party nomination practices, etc. An ancillary issue is one that is not part of designing an electoral system.

If recommending a new electoral system, we will also consider whether to recommend future reviews.

Concluding the Process

We will build time into the final weekend to celebrate our work and to discuss potential roles after the report is filed. We will invite the Lieutenant Governor and friends of the Assembly to participate in the closing event.

Summary of Key Decisions

The table below lists the major decisions the Assembly will make in the deliberation phase.³ This does not include the various 'sub-decisions', such as decisions on each design feature for the alternative system(s):

³ See "Deliberation Flow Chart" in Appendix D and "Deliberation Phase at a Glance" in Appendix E.

SUMMARY OF KEY DECISIONS

1. Approve deliberation plan
2. Identify key objectives from principles
3. Select an alternative system to design in detail
4. Design a working model for the alternative system
5. Decide whether to design a second system and, if so, which one
6. Design a working model for the second alternative system, if any
7. Approve design of alternative system(s)
8. Select best alternative system
9. Choose between current system and best alternative
10. If alternative system is chosen, decide whether to recommend it to people of Ontario
11. Approve final report

Note: Decisions 6 and 8 are not necessary if the Assembly decides to design only one alternative system.

Process Issues

Decision Making Processes

During the deliberation phase, the Assembly will make several key decisions. For some decisions, a show of hands to indicate consensus will be sufficient. We will consider a consensus to be reached when a majority of members support the decision and the rest have no major objection.

For other decisions, more formal mechanisms will be required. We will agree as an Assembly on the decision making method to be used in each case.

Group Work

Medium Groups

Plenary sessions of 104 members are too large to ensure that each member has a chance to be heard and to actively participate in the discussion and deliberation. Smaller groups provide variety in the day and more opportunities to be heard and build to consensus. If the groups are too small however, we will lose an opportunity to hear a diversity of views and increase the time required for groups to report back to the full Assembly.

In the deliberation phase, therefore, we will break into 5 medium-sized groups (of approximately 20 persons). In these groups we will use a co-facilitation approach with two facilitators in each group.

Note-taking will be important during the group discussions to record key points raised about issues or options on the table. Note-takers will record comments but will not record the names of the persons who make them.

When a group discussion leads to a 'report back' in the plenary session, we will build time in the group to agree on the key points to be reported and which member will be the spokesperson for the group.

Public Group

Subject to our sense of how the groups are working, we will continue to designate one of the groups each weekend as open to the public. This increases the transparency of the process and creates interest among researchers, media, stakeholders and others who come to observe the proceedings. We will, however, modify the public room to make it more comfortable for the members. For example, public observers could watch the group on a screen in a separate room.

As stated in our rules of procedure, participation in the public room is voluntary. Any member who does not agree to be in a public room can simply advise his or her 'buddy' at the Secretariat, the Chair, or any or any member of the staff or learning team.

Informal deliberation

It is essential for members to have opportunities to deliberate among themselves in informal settings. Members are encouraged to use the online forum, and more experienced members are available to help others participate on the forum. In addition, the Secretariat will make arrangements for informal gathering space at the hotel on Friday and Saturday evenings of Assembly weekends.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At the end of each Assembly meeting, members complete a brief confidential survey which is analysed by our external monitoring and evaluation team. The surveys during deliberation will include questions about how members are feeling about the deliberation process, opportunities to be heard, and decisions taken. For greater confidentiality, members will place their completed surveys in an envelope before passing them to the end of the table for collection.

Materials

In order to make best use of the time available for deliberation, the Chair will send some materials to members in advance of the meetings. For example, the deliberation plan will go to members to review before the first deliberation weekend. This approach was used to good effect when the Chair sent proposed rules of procedures and the values exercise before the first learning phase meeting. Members will receive additional materials for each weekend when they register.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

Our Chair, George Thomson, will create an environment conducive to deliberation and will help members to focus on the tasks in order to complete our mandate within the time available. George will keep a speakers' list during plenary sessions and will encourage participation from all members.

George will make himself available to Assembly members informally during Assembly weekends (during lunch, breaks, and evenings) and by phone in between meetings. He will encourage members to let him know how they think the deliberation phase is working and to raise any concerns or suggestions.

Members

Throughout the deliberation phase - whether in plenary sessions, smaller groups, the online forum or informal discussions - members are responsible for acting in a way that meets the spirit and letter of our shared values for working together.

Members are also responsible for keeping up with the readings in order to have an informed basis for deliberation and decision-making. Members are expected to seek assistance from the Chair, learning team, or Secretariat if they have any difficulties or concerns with the deliberation content or process.

We will ensure that there is a bilingual or French-only group at each Assembly weekend to meet the needs of French-speaking members to participate fully and comfortably.

Advisory Committees & Working Groups

Advisory committees

The Deliberation Planning Advisory Committee has provided advice to the Chair in the development of this plan. Committee members will remain available to advise the Chair on the need for mid-course revisions. They will also help to encourage informal discussions among Assembly members.

The Final Report Advisory Committee will provide advice on the preparation of the final and background reports. Because of the links between this committee and the Deliberation Planning Advisory Committee, one member from each will join in on meetings of the other.

The Consultation Submissions Advisory Committee – and any interested Assembly members - will recommend notable submissions. We will also ask for a group of

members to volunteer to recommend notable presentations from among those identified at consultation meetings.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Committee will give continue to review monitoring reports. It will also give input to the evaluators in designing the end-of-weekend surveys for the deliberation phase.

Working groups

Our four working groups⁴ will be an ongoing resource to the Assembly. Their knowledge and insight will help us as we decide on shared objectives and alternative systems. These groups may choose to meet informally and to involve other members in considering the issues they researched. We may also ask a working group to reconvene to look into a specific task related to its area of research.

Other groups

We may consider creating special-purpose groups at certain points in the deliberation phase to consider specific issues and make recommendations to the full Assembly. Such groups would be formed on a volunteer basis. One example would be a group to think about whether any ancillary issues should be mentioned in the final report, i.e issues which are important but not part of electoral system design.

Academic Director

Academic Director Jonathan Rose will provide members with tools, information, materials and frameworks to design and assess electoral systems. Jonathan and policy analysts/researchers Michael MacKenzie and Mark Lyons will be available to respond to members' questions during Assembly meetings, over lunch, in the evenings, and between weekends by phone, email or the members' forum.

Facilitators

Our team of facilitators will continue to play a vital role when members break into discussion groups. During the learning phase, the facilitators' role was to help reinforce the learning. During the deliberation phase, their role is to support group exercises that will help build to consensus decisions.

In each group, a facilitator will lead the process so that all members can contribute to the discussion. Facilitators may answer technical questions but will not offer their own perspectives or views on the issues under discussion.

The facilitators will advise the Chair on how the group exercises are working and will join the members during lunch on Assembly weekends.

Secretariat

The Secretariat's role is to support the Assembly. Staff will continue to make logistical arrangements and provide the members with materials for each meeting. Members should feel free to contact their assigned "buddy" or any other Secretariat staff on

⁴ Women and Under-Represented Groups; Geographic Representation; Political Parties; Stable Government

issues that arise. Staff will be available during lunch and breaks at Assembly meetings, and on phone or email between weekends.

External Advisors

Members of the Academic Reference Group are available to provide information and advice to members on electoral system design questions. Their contact information is on the website.

The Monitoring and Evaluation firm, Institute on Governance, will continue to monitor the Citizens' Assembly process, conduct focus groups and surveys, and prepare ongoing monitoring reports. It will also prepare a final evaluation report after the project has concluded.

We have retained a facilitation expert, Beth Allan, to advise us. Beth will work with the facilitators to obtain their input on the deliberation process and to discuss facilitation exercises and techniques. She will also attend Assembly meetings during the deliberation phase to provide ongoing advice to the Chair and facilitators.

Mary Pat MacKinnon and Judy Watling of Canadian Policy Research Networks, and Simone Chambers of the University of Toronto, have provided input to the deliberation plan and are available to provide ongoing advice as needed.

Appendix A: shared values

Our Shared Values for Working Together



Appendix B: success factors

Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Success Factors

The Citizens' Assembly members are empowered to deliberate and decide.

Learning

- The Assembly members are educated about Ontario's current electoral system and different electoral systems and the principles for assessing electoral systems.

Deliberation

- The Assembly process facilitates group cohesion, dialogue and deliberation.

Decisions

- The Assembly members have ownership of the Assembly's decisions.

Support

- The Assembly is well supported by the Secretariat team.

A broad range of Ontarians engage in the Citizens' Assembly process.

Awareness

- The Ontario public knows about the Citizens' Assembly process and opportunities to participate.

Participation

- A broad range of Ontarians participates in the Citizens' Assembly process.

Input

- Input from the public informs the Citizens' Assembly deliberations.
- The Citizens' Assembly process is seen as a model for citizen engagement and deliberation on public policy questions.

Transparency

- The Assembly process is transparent and well documented for the historical record and for the benefit of future exercises.

Appendix C: Principles

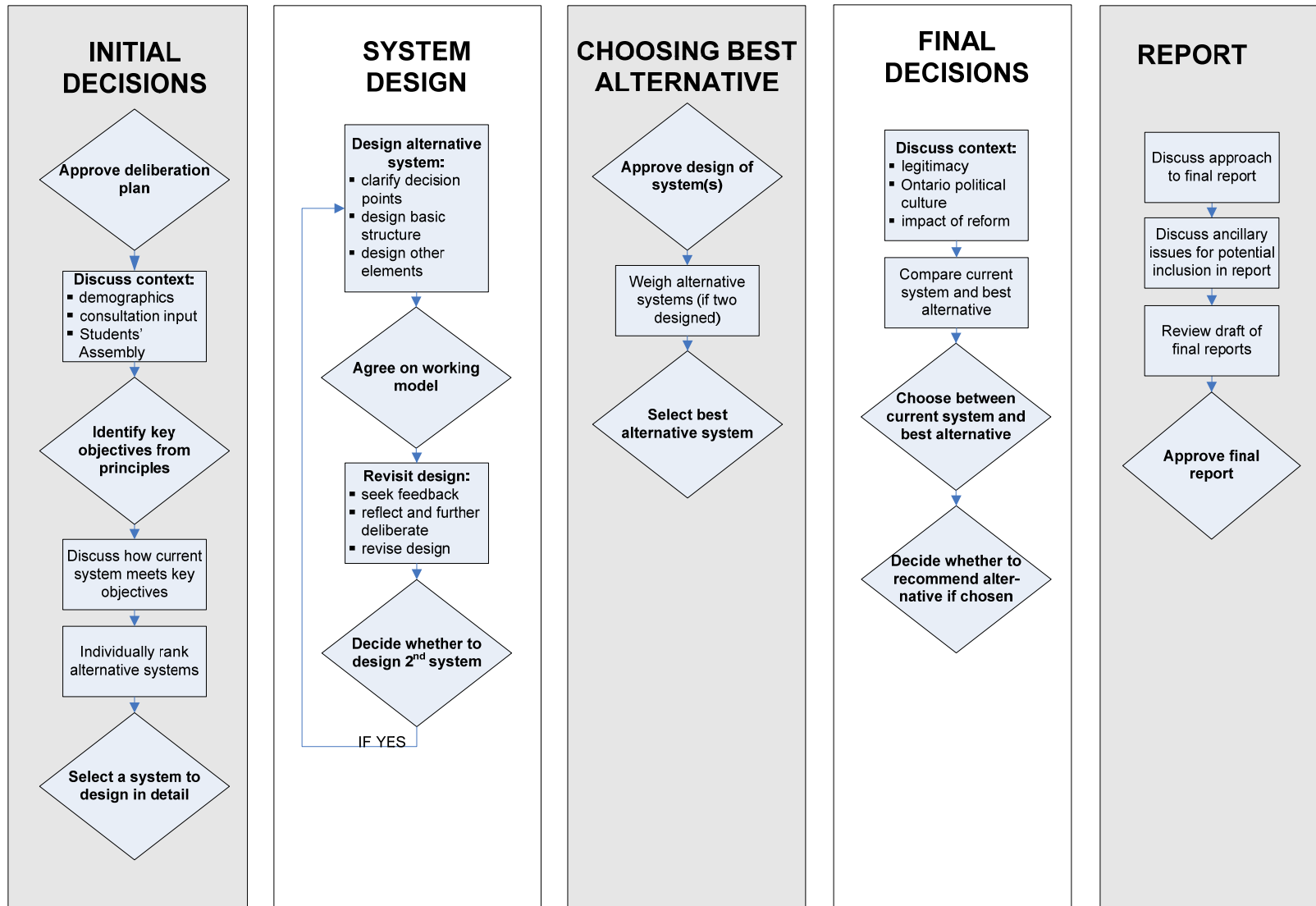
The principles, in the order stated in the regulation, are:

- legitimacy
- fairness of representation
- voter choice
- effective parties
- stable and effective government
- effective parliament
- stronger voter participation
- accountability

The Citizens Assembly identified two other features for an electoral system that should be considered:

- simplicity and practicality

Appendix D: Deliberation Flow Chart



Appendix E: Deliberation phase at a Glance

Weekend One, Feb 17-18: Context, Principles & Selecting Systems to Design

- discuss, refine and approve deliberation plan **(Decision #1)**
- hear from Stats Can on how Ontario is evolving
- discuss consultation input and hear from Students' Assembly
- discuss the task ahead
- identify key objectives for electoral systems based on principles **(Decision #2)**
- discuss how current system meets the priorities
- rank alternative systems and select one to design in detail **(Decision #3)**

Weekend Two, March 3-4: Designing Alternative Systems – Part 1

- design working model for alternative system **(Decision #4)**
- decide whether to design a second system and, if so, which one **(Decision #5)**

Weekend Three, March 17-18: Designing Alternative Systems – Part 2

- design working model for second alternative system, if any **(Decision #6)**
- reflect on first alternative based on further discussion and feedback
- discuss approach to final report

Weekend Four, March 31-April 1 Assessing the Models

- reflect on second alternative based on further discussion and feedback
- finalize design of alternative system(s) **(Decision #7)**
- decide on best alternative system **(Decision #8)**
- discuss possible ancillary issues for final report

Weekend Five, April 14-15: Final Decisions

- discuss legitimacy in Ontario context
- choose between current system and best alternative **(Decision #9)**
- if best alternative is chosen over current system, decide whether to recommend the alternative system to people of Ontario **(Decision #10)**
- review final report

Weekend Six, April 28-29: Conclusion

- approve final report **(Decision #11)**
- reflect on past and future and celebrate conclusion of Citizens' Assembly