



Citizens' Assembly
on Electoral Reform

L'Assemblée des citoyens
sur la réforme électorale

Open Forum

Weekend 1, Deliberation Phase

George Thomson
February 17, 2007



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Welcome back!

Bienvenue à la phase de délibération!

Purpose of presentation

- I am going to do a few main things this morning...
 - Talk about the challenge before us and what will guide our work
 - Talk about what deliberation is; and share with you elements and techniques of good deliberation
 - Talk about the support you can count on—people and materials
 - Talk about how we will proceed: what comes next

The challenge before us

- We don't know our destination: what we will decide
- But we have a plan...
- And we know our date of arrival: May 15th
- The way we get there is as important as the destination—it will make the final decision acceptable and informed

Our work will be guided by...

- Our mandate
- The way we make decisions
 - Find consensus
 - Not final until we agree final
- Our collective commitment to the task and to one another
- Our rules of procedure
- Our shared values for working together

Our shared values

Our Shared Values for Working Together





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A. What is Deliberation?

What is deliberation?

- Process of considering different points of view and coming to reasonable, well-informed decisions
- Involves collective problem-solving among individuals with different backgrounds, interests, and values

What is deliberation?

- 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 of fellow members
- Respectful disagreement is okay... each one of us has a right to say what we feel is best for Ontario

What is deliberation?

- The goal of deliberation is to pursue shared interests to achieve a legitimate, public-spirited outcome (not searching for a compromise or settling on the lowest level of agreement)

Elements of good deliberation

- Focus on common goal/shared interests
- Avoid fixed positions early on
- Recognize the risks of conflict
- Start with a conversation, not a debate

Common goals / shared interests

- Keep reminding ourselves of common goal: best possible system for Ontario
- Identify our priority objectives from principles
- Shared interests produce win/win results, e.g.:
 - Keep priority objectives in mind as we weigh different options
 - Help design an alternative even if you prefer SMP

Avoid fixed positions early on

- You arrive with views and preferences
 - If already locked in, this phase may be difficult and frustrating
- What drives us to positions:
 - Our backgrounds and experiences
 - It's easy (“I have a position; I can defend it”)
 - Time pressures

Avoid fixed positions

- How positions impede good deliberation:
 - Turn the discussion into a search for compromise between fixed points (lose-lose)
 - Create conflict as we defend our positions—challenges just make our positions stronger
 - Impede problem-solving



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Every error under the sun seems to arise from thinking that you are right yourself because you are yourself, and other people are wrong because they are not you.

- Thomas Hardy

Recognize the risks of conflict

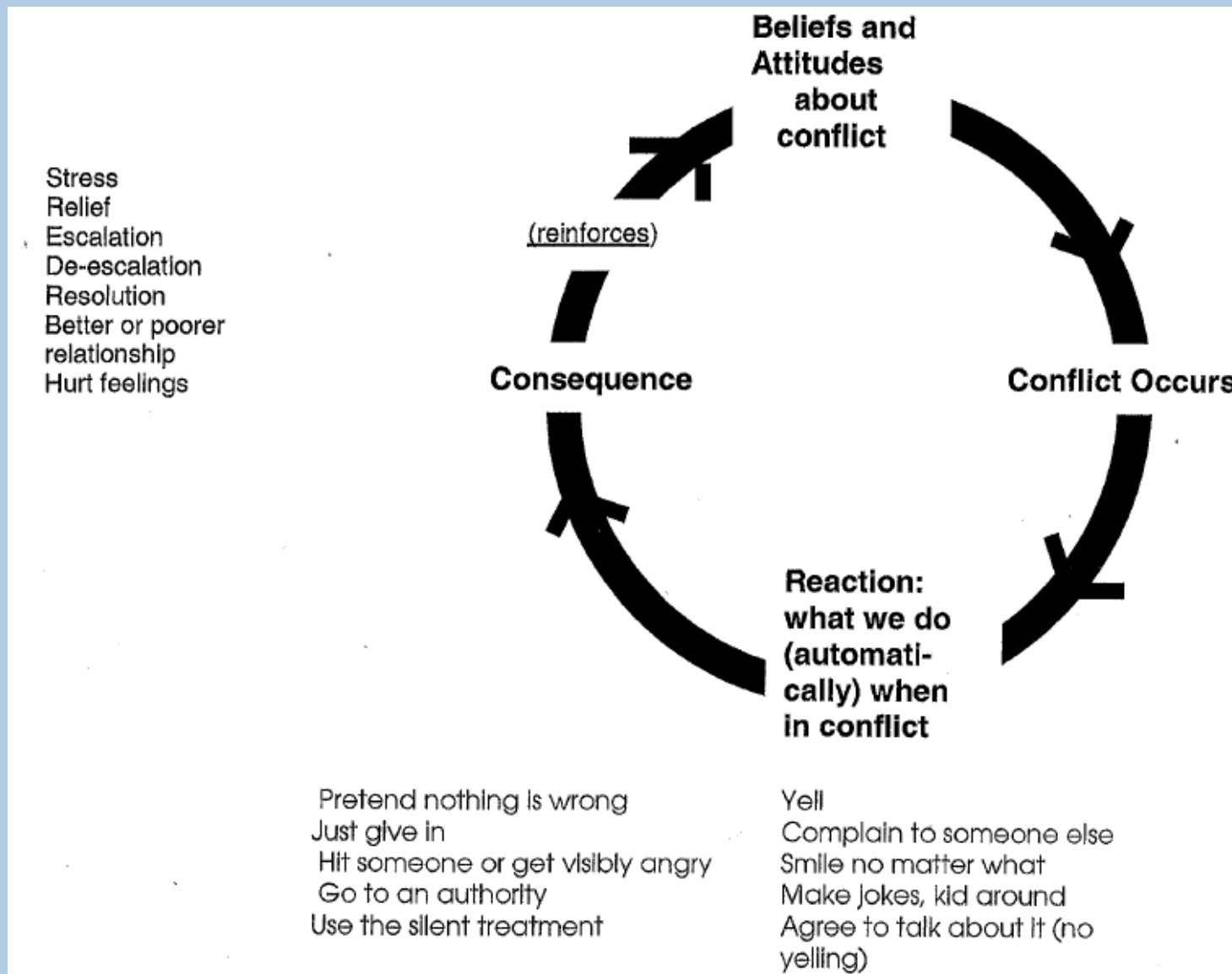
- Conflict does occur: the issue is how we manage it
- All behaviour makes sense, particularly my own to me
- Conflict from strongly held opinions, eagerness to influence others
- Normal reactions: fight or flee—gets in the way of thinking and resolving
- When conflict is not resolved, 90% of the time it's not that you can't find an answer; it's that conflict itself is getting in the way

The conflict cycle

We all have a trigger that starts us
through it...

The conflict cycle

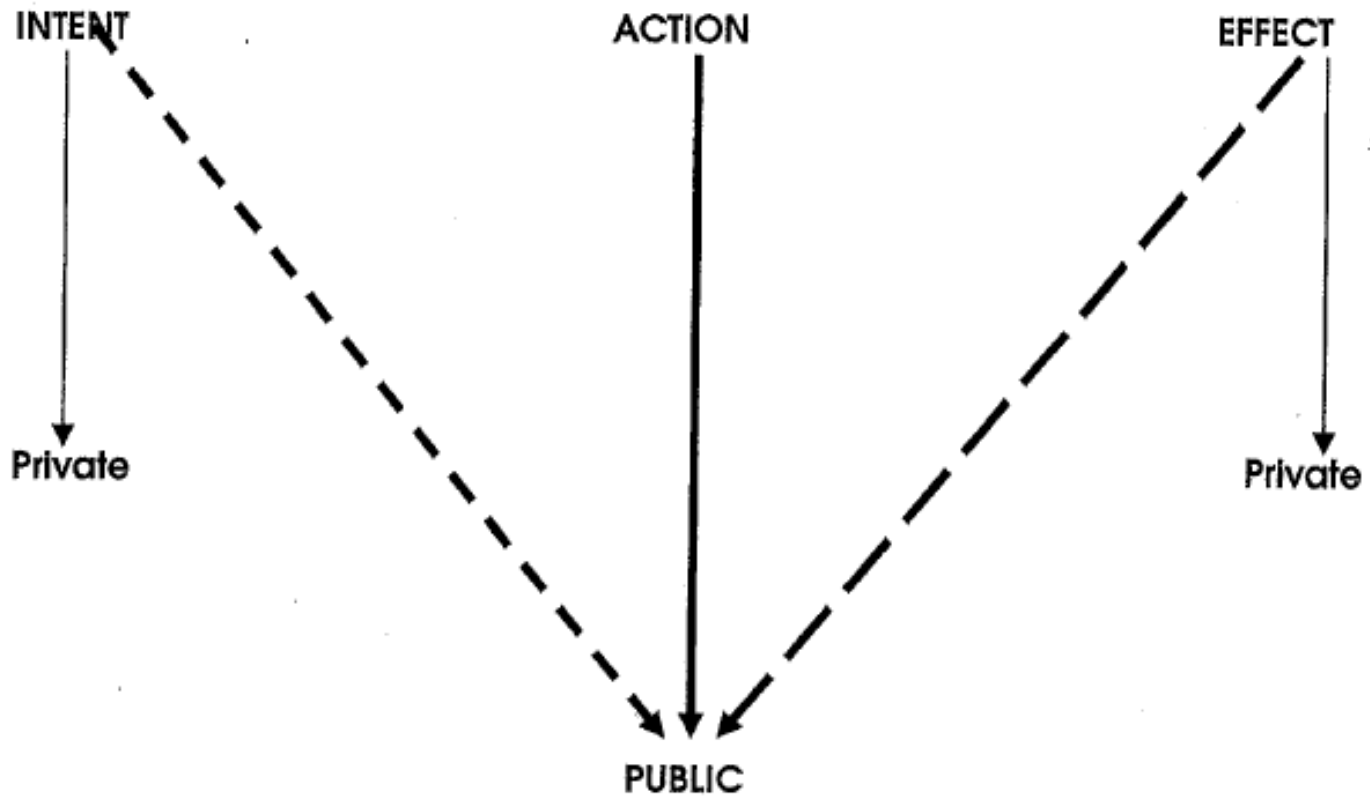
We all have learned ways of dealing with conflict that are predictable and have predictable results...



The conflict cycle

- We already have some assumptions going into deliberation, based on the previous two phases of our work
- We make assumptions about the intentions of others—what led them to say or do something; they make assumptions from how we react...

Three Cornerstones of Effective Communication



Start with a conversation, not debate

- Conversation from Latin *con* or *com*, meaning together or among and *versi*, meaning to turn
- Conversation is the act of “turning towards one another”
- All perspectives have a place at the table
- Avoid escalating the reaction—making it a personal struggle
- Move from defending to wanting to understand
- Let’s communicate, not just talk

Real conversation... involves more than sending and receiving information...[it] is one in which you start with a willingness to emerge a slightly different person. It is always an experiment, whose results are never guaranteed. It involves risk. It's an adventure...

- Theodore Zeldin



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B. Deliberation Techniques

Techniques of good deliberation

- Listen
- Question and paraphrase
- Share information
- Step back if necessary
- Let go of the small stuff
- Be self-aware & self-monitor
- Participate

Listen

- Listen to understand, not to rebut
- We are all “listening deprived”—we’d all like to be heard more
- Two-minute maximum
- “If I am heard, I’ll hear you”



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Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

- Winston Churchill

Question and paraphrase

- **Use open-ended questions vs. closed questions**
 - Curious questions, non judgmental
 - Open questions to learn, test your ideas
 - Empathy
- **Paraphrase**
 - Demonstrate that you heard and heard correctly
 - Clarify the meaning

Share / step back

- **Share information**
 - Clarify to ensure common information base
- **Step back if necessary**
 - “Hold on—this isn’t working”
 - Clarify intent (Why did someone say that?)
 - Identify effect (What effect did I have on another member?)

Let go of small stuff

- That one word (wordsmithing)
- That one design feature
- Acknowledge differences, move on and return later, if necessary

Be self-aware and self-monitor

- Am I listening; listening enough?
- Is it my turn to talk; is everyone participating?
- Am I reacting to the point or the person?
- Did I understand him/her; what can I ask to be sure?
- Are we problem-solving or taking positions?
- Am I open to other points of view?
- Am I willing to let others' views affect my own
- Am I testing my ideas with those who disagree

Participate

- We need our collective wisdom
- As Chair, I want every member to be able to say:

“The deliberation was fair because I was able to participate, I felt well heard, and I was well supported to make informed decisions.”

If we can demonstrate this, it will be an important legacy.



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C. Support for Deliberation

How will you be supported?

My role as Chair

- My challenge: ensure a fair process and get us to a decision
- I'll remind you of our shared values for working together: commitment/focus (respect timelines)
- I'll continue to seek consensus
- I'll get the sense of the room and signal when it's time to move on... We'll move forward, look at the whole, come back to issues if we need to
- I won't let us get stuck on smaller issues

I am always available

Come to me early if you are concerned about the process, or are having trouble with decisions we have made

How will you be supported?

Deliberation Advisory Committee:

- Advised on the plan and schedule
- Members will remain involved: advice to me; look for difficulties; revise the plan and schedule, as needed

Academic Director:

- Set up exercises to identify priority objectives and alternative system(s) to design
- Organize the work to design alternative(s)
- Organize the work to compare the present system to the best alternative
- Support to your work, but not a participant in that work

How will you be supported?

Facilitators

- New co-facilitator approach: a facilitator and a content expert; both will remain neutral and objective
- The facilitator role:
 - Create climate for focused conversation
 - Support decision-making and encourage participation
 - Identify conflict; clarify misunderstandings; ensure shared values respected
 - Remind you of task; ensure ready to report back
- The content expert role:
 - A resource for accurate information and clarification

How will you be supported?

Secretariat

- Support for the process
- Remaining neutral
- Your “buddies” – let them know if you need support

Beth Allan

- Facilitation expert
- Working with facilitators; supporting the deliberation process

Evaluators

- Focus now on how the deliberation process is going, with support of Monitoring & Evaluation Advisory Committee

How will you be supported?

- Advance materials will be provided wherever possible
- Member-to-member support and discussion outside of sessions really important
 - On-line Members' Forum
 - Hotel discussion lounge
 - Informal groups; evening discussions before decisions made
 - Our shared values matter, wherever discussion takes place
 - Get enough rest & time for reflection!



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D. How We Will Proceed

How will deliberation proceed?

- Deliberation plan and schedule
- 11 formal decisions
- Design work
- Overarching principles to guide design
- Final Report
- This weekend's objectives
- Materials

Deliberation plan and schedule

- Reviewed and improved by Deliberation Advisory Committee
- Sent to you in advance

Eleven formal decisions

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

Need to keep moving forward

- Tight schedule; can't back up and start again...
- But we can stop to look at our decisions thus far and revisit decisions that are not final (some are final)
- We'll revise the schedule as necessary

Design work

- A structured, supported process: a series of decisions; a chance to review the overall design at key points
- Work in medium-sized groups, but all major decisions will be made in plenary
- Maintain public small group with more distance from public—voluntary participation (speak to buddy)
- Expert opinion:
 - This is your decision, not a choice between experts
 - You have access to their ideas as you decide helpful (e.g. submissions, reference group)
 - Use experts to get feedback on decisions made

Overarching principles

- There are three principles that will guide all our work:
 - **Legitimacy**
 - What is acceptable in Ontario (e.g. amount / pace of change; size of legislature)
 - Any recommendation is a proposal to the people of Ontario—must gain legitimacy with them
 - **Simplicity and practicality**
 - Your added principle
 - Any recommendation must be clear, understandable, and able to be implemented

Overarching design objectives

- **Representation by population**
 - A legal requirement (with some flexibility)
 - Balancing a legal principle against geographic / population realities
 - Already an issue in Ontario

Final report

- Big challenge, given timelines (need to translate, design and print by May 15 deadline)
- Two reports:
 - Brief final report (our main focus)
 - Background report (Secretariat publication)
- Final Report Advisory Committee will advise on final report, review background report
- Full Assembly will review and approve final report
- What will allow 104 authors to produce a report?
 - Early feedback
 - Concentrated effort of Advisory Committee
 - Avoid wordsmithing and “writing by committee”



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E. This Weekend

This weekend's objectives

- Approve meeting notes from Weekend 6
- Approve deliberation plan and schedule
- Receive information about Ontario context
- Discuss what we heard in consultation
- Listen to/meet with Students' Assembly
- Review our mandate and the task ahead
- Decide on priority design objectives
- Identify first alternative system for detailed design work

Materials

- Deliberation plan
- Deliberation schedule
- Consultation reports
 - Written submissions
 - Public meetings
 - Special outreach
- DVD highlights of presentations
- Descriptions of lesser known systems
- List of possible ancillary issues

Other systems / ancillary issues

Unique systems

- Range of other systems and voting methods recommended in the consultation
- We've prepared descriptions of them for you so none get lost

Ancillary issues

- Many other issues raised in consultation: some clearly outside of mandate (e.g. direct election of Premier, recall of politicians, campaign financing)
- Some are part or close to mandate, depending on what we recommend (e.g. creation of party lists, candidate selection and nomination process)

Ancillary issues

- First task is to meet our mandate, but we have a limited opportunity to comment on related issues
- Some issues we may feel are related to our task & are important, e.g. suggested wording of referendum; need for public education
- We'll prepare a brief analysis of ancillary issues that interest you
- I'll ask for volunteers to help
- We'll discuss our views on these issues on Weekend 4



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F. Conclusion

Last thoughts

- It is our decision—not the experts; not our constituents; not the consultation participants
- The consultation process was selective
 - Not a poll of all Ontarians, but still very valuable
- We will never be unanimous—consensus is not the same as unanimity
 - A group decision: we all must adapt to the group to some degree
 - Particularly here where dealing with trade-offs, relative emphasis of different objectives

Last thoughts

- We must make the best decision on the information we have (we always feel if only we knew more...)
- We must have confidence in our ability to decide
- There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed