

<b>The Nugget (North Bay, ON)</b>		Order/Commande
Date <b>25.10.2006</b>		<b>122359</b>
Circ. <b>17000</b>	Page <b>A4</b>	<b>1 / 1</b>

# It's time for electoral reform

**E**lectoral reform may be coming to Ontario, but not in time for next year's vote. Instead, voters could be casting ballots to change the election process.

Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Marie Bountrogianni will introduce legislation that would put a referendum question about electoral reform on the ballot in 2007.

That question will depend on recommendations brought forward by a citizens' assembly which will review the current system.

Electoral reform is overdue not only in Ontario, but across the country.

Voters have long been frustrated by skewed elections that see majority governments elected with less than 50 per cent of the popular vote. As that frustration grows, fewer people turn out to vote because they believe their ballots don't count. The current first-past-the-post system, based on the archaic British parliamentary system, elects the government by the number of seats won, even if it only garners 38 per cent of the popular vote. Former prime minister Jean Chretien benefited from the system for three consecutive terms. With the Reform party and Conservatives splitting the vote, his percentages were irrelevant and he swept to power.

That's not democracy. The number of MPPs in the Ontario legislature, or MPs in the House of Commons should be determined by the overall percentage of vote the party receives.

Better yet, Canada could move to-

ward an American-style system with checks and balances such as an elected Senate, where members serve six-year terms with a rotating vote every two years.

As well, the prime minister could be elected directly by the people, rather than winning the most number of seats.

An unpopular prime minister could be controlled by the Senate and a similar House of Representatives.

The Iraq war has become a tough political fight for Republicans in the U.S. They may lose control of Congress because people are not happy with the way President George W. Bush is handling the war.

Voters can make a statement. In Canada, we are stuck with a bad government for five years until we can exercise our option for change.

Ontario has moved to have elections on a fixed date every four years, which is a start.

Maybe there's a made-in-Canada solution, rather than Americanizing our electoral system.

Either way, the status quo isn't acceptable.

