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Dear Fellow Assembly Members:

As we get closer to our first meeting in the fall, I have been doing a lot of thinking about how we will work together as an Assembly. As you may know, the regulation that establishes the Assembly requires me, as Chair, to prepare rules of procedure for the Assembly to approve. In undertaking this task, I have looked at the procedural rules already set out in the regulation, the approach the Citizens' Assembly in British Columbia took, and my own sense of what works well in large groups.

Before our first meeting on September 9th, I encourage you to read the three items attached to this letter:

- The procedural rules the regulation makes mandatory (Tab A)
- Additional procedural rules that I propose we adopt for our meetings, recognizing that they can be changed or added to as we learn to work together (Tab B)
- My ideas for developing shared values on how we want to work together as an Assembly (Tab C)

I am very much looking forward to discussing all of this when we meet.

Yours truly,

George Thomson
Chair, Citizens' Assembly

Summary of Mandatory Procedures

From Ontario Regulation 82/06 under the *Election Act*

Duties of Chair

The Chair will prepare rules of procedure for approval by the Assembly and preside over the Assembly meetings.

The Chair may choose from the other members of the Assembly up to three deputy chairs to assist him.

Decision-making

The Assembly's decisions will be made by a vote of the majority of the members present. The Chair shall not vote, except to break a tie.

Access to Assembly Meetings

Meetings of the whole Assembly shall be open to the public, but meetings of smaller subgroups need not be.

A person with a disability is entitled, on request, to have the meeting conducted so as to be accessible to him or her.

Simultaneous interpretation between French and English will be made available, on request, for members and for the public at meetings of the whole assembly and at meetings of smaller subgroups.

The Chair's Proposed Rules of Procedure

Overall Approach

1. Common sense and reasonableness will be the primary guides in determining how we conduct our meetings.
2. We will conduct ourselves in an organized but informal manner that reflects our values for working together and avoids formal "rules of order." The Chair may decide on more formal procedures, if necessary, after hearing the views of the Assembly.
3. The Chair will ensure there are regular open forums or question periods to consider any matters of interest to Assembly members. There will be at least one such session every weekend for at least 15 minutes.

Decision-making

4. A quorum will be 50% of the membership. A quorum is the number of members required to be in attendance before the Assembly can function or make decisions.
5. Where possible, decisions will be reached by consensus. Consensus means that, in the opinion of the Chair, a very clear majority of the members support or 'can live with' the decision. When the Chair summarizes a consensus position, that is the equivalent of a vote unless a vote is requested by several Assembly members.
6. Voting will be by a show of hands or by electronic voting. The Chair may consult with the Assembly and decide that a particular vote shall be by secret ballot.
7. The Chair does not have a vote, but may cast a vote if the Assembly members produce a tie.
8. The Chair will consult the Assembly before determining when a vote is intended to be a final decision on an issue before the Assembly.
9. The Chair will ensure that all decisions of the Assembly are recorded and provided to the Assembly in the form of meeting notes for approval. Once approved, the meeting notes will be posted on the Citizens' Assembly website.

Sub-groups

10. Smaller discussion groups will be formed each weekend with facilitators. These groups will be roughly equal in size, with adjustments to ensure the needs for French and English-speaking Assembly members are met. Discussion group membership will be changed every weekend.
11. In addition, the Chair may propose the creation of working groups to consider one or more topics and report back to the Assembly. Membership in a working group will be voluntary.

Openness

12. Meetings of the whole Assembly will be open to the public and the media.
13. Members of the public and media are observers and shall not disrupt the proceedings. Observers are not to engage in discussions with Assembly members while the Assembly is in session.
14. One discussion group at each Assembly meeting will be open to public observers and its discussions may be videotaped as a representative small group. Assembly members assigned to this group may choose to join another discussion group.
15. The Assembly may decide by majority vote to meet privately in one or more large discussion groups to consider any particular matter.

Revisions

16. The Chair or several Assembly members may ask the Assembly to review and, if necessary, reconfirm these rules of procedure during the life of the Assembly.

Proposed Decision:

That the Citizens' Assembly adopt the above rules of procedure, recognizing that they can be changed or added to as our work progresses.

Developing Our Values for Working Together

During our first day together, the Assembly will collectively develop the values that we believe should guide us as we work together over the next eight months.

I encourage all of us to think about what values we believe should be reflected in the way we work together as an Assembly. How do we believe we should conduct ourselves as Assembly members and how do we want our fellow Assembly members to conduct themselves? We are hoping to model a unique style of citizen engagement and so how we learn, consult and make decisions together will play a role in determining our success in doing so.

The Process for Developing Shared Values

On September 9th, Assembly members will meet in small groups to discuss the 2-4 values that we believe are the most important ones in guiding the way we work together. Each group will report back to the full Assembly and we will adopt a combined list of values that includes the ones most frequently proposed by the discussion groups. This list will be prominently displayed and will be our guide. We may wish to revisit or expand the list of values as we do our work.

Preparing for the Discussion

Values reflect what we believe and what we stand for. Our values will describe how we will 'walk the talk' and support one another throughout the process. They are a way to hold ourselves and the others responsible for how we work together. They help to ensure we are a model of how groups of citizens, such as this Assembly, can work together positively and effectively. They act as a common reference point or shared code of conduct.

As you get ready for the first meeting of the Assembly, think about what you feel we should most value in the way we work together. To get us started, a document is attached from the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly, which reviews attitudes and actions that support good dialogue.

Guidelines for Dialogue

- Listen to understand
- Respect differences in the room
- Ask questions of others
- All participants are equal
- Time available for the group is shared

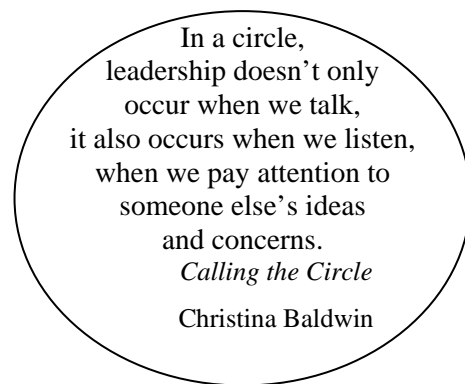
Notes on Dialogue

Dialogue precedes decision-making. The first two phases of our work focus on dialogue; the last phase will begin with dialogue then move to decision-making. While we are learning and listening to others’ views during the first two phases, members should suspend judgement.

Listening – The word dialogue suggests talking or discussing. Interestingly enough though, dialogue works best when people listen. All members of a dialogue should be willing to consider altering their points of view in light of what they hear from other members. This requires good listening skills, an ability see things from another’s perspective and an open mind.

Dialogue emphasizes the *process* of examining the question at hand, not just the product or answer. You can think about dialogue as a two-part process:

1. One part happens “on the stage” and is, for example, what is recorded in meeting notes.
2. The other, equally important, element is found “backstage,” and could include things such as body language, tone of voice or who speaks most often.



A focus on both components is necessary for the effectiveness of our process.

Respect is at the core of the dialogue process. One way of being respectful is to be highly aware of how our actions affect other members. Respect also means honouring others’ opinions, beliefs and needs. This helps build trust.

Conflict – An element of the dialogue process that can be surprising and new to many of us is that conflict is not a bad thing. But, how do we welcome conflict without endangering relationships or derailing the process? Conflict can become a healthy part of a discussion when it’s seen as simply the expression of disagreement. With this perspective, conflict is an opportunity to share diverse viewpoints that help the group explore the strengths and weaknesses of its attitudes, assumptions and plans.

Another benefit of accepting conflict is that it provides motivation for improvement and growth – whether member relationships or Assembly work is at hand. Our challenge is to expect and accept conflict so that differences can be expressed without fear or resentment. We can create such a climate by not focusing on the *individual* who raises a point of disagreement, but by focusing instead on the *issue*.

Silence is a powerful tool for use during dialogue. It can create space for reflecting, for giving less confident voices a chance to step in, and for letting things surface that may have otherwise been unnoticed. If you think your voice is being heard more than others’, try counting to ten or more after the speaker finishes. This makes valuable space for quieter voices to jump in. When the whole group could use a moment for reflection, suggest a period of silence or a break. Returning to the discussion after such silences can refresh and refocus the group.

Attitudes and Actions that support dialogue

Active listening

- Listen fully while another member is speaking so you can understand their point of view. Don’t be too quick to rehearse your own statement or to look for flaws in their ideas
- Allow somebody’s new or controversial idea to percolate in your mind before you respond. Resist reacting
- Draw each other out with supportive questions. “Is this what you mean?”

Cooperation

- Recognise that rarely is there one “right” answer, only one that works best for the whole group
- Refrain from irrelevant or disrespectful interruptions
- Seek common ground

Respect

- Acknowledge and respect differences
- Communicate directly and honestly
- Thank fellow members for their contribution

Common ownership of ideas

- “We all hold a piece of the truth”; a great idea often arises from some of the previous suggestions made by others
- The whole group takes responsibility for setbacks, tries not to blame others

Value feelings

- Both feelings and logical argument are important
- Express the emotions that accompany strongly held values

Value conflict

- Conflict is natural; it only means that there is disagreement and diversity in the group
- If handled cooperatively and honestly, and without personal animosity or attachment, conflict could lead to more options and possibly better decisions
- Have patience
- Challenge ideas, not people

Participation

- Everyone participates, not just those who are most vocal
- Speak when you have a contribution to make
- Share opportunities for leading the conversation, giving information, suggesting a break, reporting back to the whole group, keeping time, etc.
- Everyone seeks creative solutions and participates in every decision