



**Working Groups &  
Advisory Committees**  
September 19, 2006

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## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to give Citizens' Assembly members more information about the four working groups and the four advisory committees that the Chair has suggested.

The working groups will look at *content* issues related to electoral systems. The advisory committees will review important aspects of the Assembly *process*. Participating on either a working group or an advisory committee is completely optional.

The information here will help prepare you for the discussion of working groups and advisory committees that will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30, Weekend #2 of the Learning Phase.

## Working Groups

### Purpose of Working Groups

Working groups are a relatively informal way for small groups of Assembly members to explore important issues related to electoral systems in a bit more depth than is possible in meetings of the full Assembly, given our time constraints. The working groups will share what they have learned with the Assembly as a whole, so that all members can benefit from their research and discussions.

Working groups would be ideal for members who enjoy research or have a particular interest in one of the topics described below.

### Working Group Topics

The Chair proposes four working groups on topics that he thinks would benefit from additional investigation by Assembly members. These topics and the key questions the working groups would discuss are provided in the table below:

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Key Question for Investigation</b>
<b>Women and Other Under-represented Groups</b>	What impacts do different electoral systems have on the representation of women and other under-represented groups in the legislature?
<b>Geographic Representation</b>	What is the impact of different electoral systems on geographic representation?
<b>Political Parties</b>	How do different electoral systems affect the role of political parties in elections?
<b>Stable Government</b>	What is stable government and how stable are governments under different electoral systems?

## **Role of Working Groups**

With the guidance and expertise of Ailsa Henderson, a political scientist and researcher, working groups will:

- look at what the research says about their topic
- discuss how the research findings are relevant to the Assembly’s task of assessing electoral systems
- decide what issues or questions are the most important and should be brought back to the full Assembly for discussion
- report back to the Assembly.

## **Working Group Process & Timing**

The Chair proposes the following process and timing:

### **Step 1: Confirm Working Group Topics**

On Saturday, Sept. 30 (Weekend #2), the Assembly will discuss the proposed working groups with Ailsa Henderson, and decide which working groups should be established.

## **Step 2: Volunteer for Working Groups**

On Saturday evening, a table will be set up at the Holiday Inn Yorkdale, where Ailsa and Secretariat staff will be available to answer questions about the working groups and take the names of volunteers.

## **Step 3: Distribute Materials**

Before the first working group meeting, Ailsa will send members who volunteered a one-page summary of the main issues for discussion and a few relevant articles and web links.

## **Step 4: First Meeting of Working Group**

The first working group meetings will be scheduled on Friday or Saturday evening on Weekend #3 (Oct. 13 & 14). Members will begin to discuss the summary and reading materials that Ailsa provided or recommended.

## **Step 5: Second Meeting of Working Group**

The second working group meetings will be scheduled for Friday or Saturday evening on Weekend #4 (Oct. 27 & 28). Members will continue to discuss their research findings and how these findings relate to the Assembly's mandate to assess electoral systems.

## **Step 6: Third Meeting of Working Group**

The third working group meetings will be scheduled for Friday or Saturday evening on Weekend #5 (Nov. 10 & 11). Members will discuss how to present their group's key findings to the full Assembly.

## **Step 7: Report to Full Assembly**

Each working group will report to the full Assembly on Sunday, Nov. 26, Day 2 of Weekend #6 of the Learning Phase.

## **Advisory Committees**

### **Purpose of Advisory Committees**

The Chair believes that committees should be established to ensure that Assembly members have a strong voice on important aspects of the Assembly process.

## Advisory Committee Topics

The Chair proposes four advisory committees, described in the table below:

<b>Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Description of Role</b>
<b>Evaluation of Assembly Process</b>	<p>Review and comment on the reports from our evaluators so we can improve our processes as we go.</p> <p>Consider issues that may arise in connection with the surveys or other parts of the monitoring and evaluation process.</p>
<b>Public Consultation Submissions</b>	<p>Review and comment on the reports Secretariat staff will prepare summarizing written submissions and what we heard in the consultation.</p> <p>Draw Assembly members' attention to notable submissions.</p>
<b>Deliberation Phase Planning</b>	<p>Help the Chair develop a plan for the Deliberation Phase, which starts on Feb. 17, 2007, when the Assembly will decide what to recommend to the government.</p>
<b>Final Report</b>	<p>Review and comment on the design and content of the final report (due May 15, 2007), as the Secretariat prepares drafts for review and approval by the whole Assembly.</p> <p>Review and comment on the more detailed background report, which will document the Citizens' Assembly process.</p>

## **Advisory Committee Process & Timing**

The Chair proposes the following process and timing:

### **Step 1: Confirm Advisory Committee Topics**

On Saturday, Sept. 30, the Assembly will discuss the proposed committees, and decide which committees should be established.

### **Step 2: Volunteer for Advisory Committees**

On Saturday evening, a table will be set up at the Holiday Inn Yorkdale, where Secretariat staff will be available to answer questions about the committees and take the names of volunteers.

### **Step 3: Committee Work**

The advisory committees will work on a more informal basis than the working groups. Members will stay in touch by phone or e-mail and, if necessary, meet on a Saturday evening. Two Secretariat staff members will be assigned to each advisory committee to provide coordination and support.

## **Questions and Answers**

### **Role of Working Groups & Advisory Committees**

#### **Does this mean that some of us will learn more than others on certain topics?**

No. The working groups will share their research with the full Assembly and start off the discussion and debate on their topics.

#### **Will working groups or committees make decisions?**

No. The working groups will review research and report to the Assembly as a whole. The advisory committees will provide input on processes but will not make decisions on behalf of the Assembly. For example, they will provide input to documents that will be presented to the full Assembly for review and approval.

### **Joining a Group or Committee**

#### **Can I be involved in more than one group?**

The Chair suggests that Assembly members limit themselves to one group or committee, in order to give everyone who is interested a chance to get involved. Space permitting, you are welcome to observe any working group meeting. And if you have not joined a particular advisory committee, but have thoughts on any aspect of the Assembly process, your comments are always welcome.

### **Will I be paid for this work?**

Participation on these groups is voluntary. There is no additional payment for this work. However, please talk to the staff person supporting your group or committee, or your buddy, if you require reimbursement for reasonable expenses.

### **How much time is required?**

The working groups will involve three evening meetings and some reading and preparation in-between meetings. The advisory committees may not have formal meetings but will involve the review of draft materials and communication by phone or e-mail.

### **Do I have to be available for Friday evening meetings?**

We expect that two working groups will meet on three Friday evenings and that the other two will meet on three Saturday evenings. The schedule will take into account the availability of the members for these time slots.

## **Size of Groups & Committees**

### **How many people will be on each working group and advisory committee?**

Each group would have a minimum of three Assembly members and a maximum of 10.

### **What if more than 10 people volunteer?**

If the number is slightly more than 10, all volunteers could be accommodated on a working group or committee. If the number is much larger, we could use a random selection process to achieve a manageable number.

## **Coordination & Support**

### **Who will chair the working groups?**

Political scientist Ailsa Henderson will facilitate the working groups and provide expertise. In addition, the working groups may select one of the members to serve as chair.

### **What is the working group facilitator's role?**

Ailsa Henderson will:

- Help the Assembly to establish up to four working groups on topics relevant to electoral systems
- Provide electronic and print resources to working group members
- Facilitate three meetings of each working group
- Be available as a resource to working group members in-between meetings
- Bring in additional experts as required
- Offer advice in preparing the working group reports
- Hear the working group reports and discuss findings with the full Assembly.

**Who will chair the advisory committees?**

The committees may decide to select one of the members to serve as chair. Two Secretariat staff members will coordinate and support each committee.