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Election reform overdue

The provincial government has started a process that could change the way Ontario residents elect politicians in the province.

The Ontario government is in the midst of setting up a Citizens' Assembly for Election Reform. The citizens' assembly will be made up of randomly selected people from within their respective ridings. This group of 104 will have an awesome responsibility. It will be their job to listen to Ontarians and come up with recommendations on changing the electoral process.

It is certainly due.

The British parliamentary system was created in May of 1215 by King John, making it 791 years old. While there have been many changes along the way, the current system has some major flaws. One of those is proportional government, or the lack of. How else can we explain a government that can get 35% or 40% of the popular vote and end up with a solid majority? Ontario residents need to know their votes count, and the current system doesn't cut it.

In essence, in a majority government, the premier almost has the power of a king. He can fire cabinet ministers for disagreeing with him or kick somebody out of the party for voting the way that MPP's constituents directed him/her to if it goes against the party. Where is the democracy there? That is one change that should be

high on the list.

This doesn't mean all parts of the parliamentary system need to be scrapped.

The government said if the recommendation is to change the electoral process, it would hold a referendum and let the people decide.

That is a good thing, but the government should avoid what the British Columbia government did. The question put to B.C. voters was to either accept all

COMMENT

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the changes or stay with the status quo.

Again, some proposed changes might be good,

while others are not. The recommendations should be put into blocks so the public could vote on them independently. The public might be opposed to one part, but all could be lost because of it. This could make it easy if a government just wanted to go through the motions of election reform. Without voting on blocks of recommendations, if it failed a government could simply say they tried, but the voters rejected it.

The assembly should even consider some of the rules the provincial government imposes on municipalities, to make it more responsible to the people.

The federal government should also take a look at doing something similar.

This could be very interesting and definitely worth keeping an eye on.

