

The Ballot - September 2006

Welcome to the September issue of The Ballot!

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From the Chair



My fellow Assembly members arrived for Weekend One full of energy and excitement for the task ahead. We got right to work, establishing the procedures and shared values that will govern our work for the next nine months.

We also started learning about different electoral systems and participated in a simple voting simulation to demonstrate how different electoral systems can produce very different results.

In small group discussions, we began to identify ideas about what electoral systems should accomplish and how our ideas link to the principles and characteristics set out in the regulation that established the Assembly.

As we continue through the Learning Phase we will explore how different electoral systems emphasize different principles and how choosing an electoral system involves trade-offs, or give and take, between a number of desired principles and objectives. Remember, you can learn along with us by accessing the learning materials that will be posted on our site after each weekend.

George Thomson



The Learning Phase is Underway!

Assembly members met as a group for the first time on September 9th and 10th. Jonathan Rose, the Academic Director, led members through an introduction to the Learning Phase and a discussion about electoral systems and what they can accomplish.



Assembly member Bruno Steinke makes a comment during a plenary session.



Darcie Beckley, Assembly member, participates in the discussion during Weekend One.

In addition, members were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and tour the Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park.



Assembly member Salvación Villamil presented His Honour with a lapel pin from Niagara Falls.



His Honour speaks with Assembly members (from left) Nuala Wiecewski, Pamela Patterson and Carolyn Agasild.

Assembly meetings are held at Osgoode Hall, York University (Keele Campus) and all plenary sessions are open to the public. An outline of the Learning Phase follows. A [detailed schedule](#) is available on our site.

Weekend 1 September 9-10	Creating Community
Weekend 2 September 30 – October 1	Parliament, Parties and Values
Weekend 3 October 14-15	Electoral Systems I Plurality/Majority > discussion of First-Past-the-Post
Weekend 4 October 28-29	Electoral Systems II Proportional Representation/Mixed Systems
Weekend 5 November 11-12	Values and Electoral Reform > international experiences
Weekend 6	Simulated Elections

November 25-26	
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The Ballot Box with Dr. Rose



It is common to think of candidates who do not win elections as having been defeated. Candidates might be defeated because they received fewer votes or because their party did poorly.

But there is one place where some defeated candidates are actually “winners”. In the German Land (or province) of Baden-Württemberg (B-W), candidates who are defeated in their electoral district get a second chance to win a seat.

In B-W, like in Ontario and the rest of Canada, voters select the candidate of their choice and the candidate with the most votes wins a seat. This happens in each of B-W's 70 single-member electoral districts. These candidates are said to receive a “direct mandate” from the voters.

In B-W an additional 50 seats are allocated to the parties according to their share of the total votes. The innovation is that these seats are awarded to the “best runners-up” of each party (i.e. the defeated candidates with the highest vote totals in their districts). In B-W, these candidates are said to receive a “second mandate.” Because second mandates are given to those who initially lost in their local district, some districts may have more than one representative whereas others may have only one.

So, if anyone ever asks, you can tell them there is a place where even some defeated candidates are winners.

Conference on Values-driven Electoral Reform

A number of world-renowned experts in electoral systems will be talking to the Citizens' Assembly in November, and have agreed to share their knowledge more broadly by participating in a conference at Queen's University.

This conference will be an opportunity for the academic community, policy analysts, stakeholders and interested members of the public to engage these experts in a discussion about the design of electoral systems in Canada and abroad. Each session will emphasize the importance of values in electoral system reform and design. The panellists will initiate discussions and audience members will be encouraged to contribute to the debate.

Where: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston

When: Sunday November 12 – Monday November 13

Learn more about the conference and register to attend by visiting the [Queen's University, School of Policy Studies](#) website.

New on Our Site

New content is being added to the Citizens' Assembly website every week. Recently launched areas include:

- [Learn with the Assembly](#)
- [Public Forum](#)

Contact Us

Questions or comments about The Ballot? Send an e-mail to:

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