

The Ballot - November 2006

Welcome to the November issue of The Ballot!

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From the Chair



Now that we've completed the Learning Phase my fellow Assembly members and I can say with confidence that there are many possibilities for the future of Ontario's electoral system. Though we've learned about the principles of electoral systems and the mechanics of systems in use around the world, we're just beginning to discover what Ontarians value in an electoral system.

On behalf of the Assembly, I invite you to express your views and participate in this historic process. Whether you know a lot about electoral systems, or have just started learning about them, we want to hear from you. Ask yourself what values you think Ontario's electoral system should represent; then send us your comments, register to make a presentation at a public consultation meeting, or come to a meeting in your area and participate in the discussion.

The deadline for written comments is January 15, 2007. This will give us time to read your submissions before we begin meeting, in February, to deliberate and form our recommendation to the government.

Don't miss this chance to have your say about the future of Ontario's electoral system. We're listening!

George Thomson



The Learning Phase is Complete!

Assembly members spent six weekends this fall learning about Ontario's first-past-the-post system, and other electoral systems, to prepare for the task ahead.

Dr. Jonathan Rose, professor of political studies at Queen's University, led the Learning Phase and brought in guest speakers from around the world.

All of the Assembly's meetings were open to the public and videotaped by TVO. Visit [Learn with the Assembly](#) to access learning materials and watch the plenary sessions.

Consultation is Underway

The Consultation Phase is underway! The Assembly is hosting about 40 consultation meetings across the province. Visit [our site](#) to find the one nearest you.

Members of the public are invited to [make presentations](#), participate in the discussion at consultation meetings, and send [written comments](#) to the Assembly. Presentations, discussions at public meetings, and written comments will inform the Assembly's deliberations when it begins meeting in February to form a recommendation to the government.

The Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform



**The Students' Assembly
on Electoral Reform**

This special report is from guest writer Peter MacLeod, of the [Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform](#). The Students' Assembly brought 103 high school students together to evaluate Ontario's electoral system in a brief but challenging exercise that mirrored the Citizens' Assembly Process.

The 103 members of the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform gathered last week in Huntsville. As organizers, we kept fingers crossed as the buses, trains and planes all arrived on time. The next five days would be a whirlwind.

While we expected the students to be keen, no one anticipated how quickly they would become fluent in the major electoral systems presented to them. The learning part of the program was ably assisted by the Academic Director of the Citizens' Assembly, two policy analysts from the Citizens' Assembly Secretariat, and two facilitators who taught our peer facilitators and designed small group activities. Discussion flowed from plenary sessions to small groups and late into the night through student-directed workshops. It was truly an electoral systems feast.

We could not have guessed just how passionately the students would debate and defend the systems they believe should shape the future of Ontario's democracy.

Ultimately, a decision had to be made, so a two-round voting system was devised to produce a majority, while offering members two opportunities to vote. The final vote endorsed change, greater proportionality and local representation, with 57% of student members recommending Mixed Member Proportional, 30% Single Transferable Vote and 13% Alternative Vote in the second round.

Now, with our 103 members back in their schools and communities, the second phase of our program begins. Some 200 schools have registered to participate and we expect some 10,000 Ontario high school students to take part in classroom activities and become more familiar with many of the systems the Citizens' Assembly has explored. They too will cast a vote for the system that they think would best serve Ontarians, so we're still a long way from the finish line. The final results of the Students' Assembly process will be presented to the Citizens' Assembly on February 17, 2007.

From Votes to Seats

From Votes to Seats, the textbook that was prepared for Citizens' Assembly members is available to [download](#) in [The Classroom](#) on our site. If you prefer, you can send an e-mail to theballot@citizensassembly.gov.on.ca to request a copy by mail. Be sure to include your name and complete mailing address!

New on Our Site

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

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