

The Ballot - February 2007

Welcome to the February issue of The Ballot!

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From the Chair



With the first of our deliberation meetings over it's clear that the Assembly has a great deal to consider in forming our recommendation to the government. In November, December and January, Assembly members attended public consultation meetings and we have also been reviewing the written submissions we received. It's time well spent in preparation for the task ahead.

To help Assembly members through this process, we have prepared three summary reports, one each on the public consultation meetings, written submissions, and special outreach meetings we held. These reports will be on-line soon so you too will have a chance to see what Ontarians had to say about electoral systems and the Assembly process in general.

With all that we heard from the public and learned during the Learning Phase I'm confident that Assembly members are well equipped to deliberate and form a recommendation for Ontario's electoral system. What that recommendation will be remains to be seen, and I hope you will continue to follow the process until the Assembly delivers its report on May 15, 2007.

George Thomson



The Deliberation Phase is Underway!

Assembly members have completed the first of six weekend meetings that make up the Deliberation Phase. The materials used at each weekend meeting will be posted in the [Deliberation Room](#) as soon as possible after each meeting. A [detailed schedule](#) is posted on our site, check back often for updates.

February 17 – 18, 2007	Context, Priorities & Selecting Systems to Design
March 3 – 4, 2007	Designing Alternative Systems – Part 1
March 17 – 18, 2007	Designing Alternative Systems – Part 2
March 31 – April 1, 2007	Assessing the Models

April 14 – 15, 2007	Final Decisions
April 28 – 29, 2007	Conclusion

Assembly meetings are held at [York University's Osgoode Hall \(Keele Campus\)](#) in Toronto. Please note that Weekend 5 meetings will be held at 900 Bay Street in Toronto. All meetings are open to the public.

Don't forget to visit [TVO's Citizens' Assembly micro-site](#) to access video of Assembly meetings, reports on public consultation meetings, member profiles and more.

Last Chance to Send in Written Comments!

Though the deadline for written comments to the Assembly was January 31st, we will continue to accept submissions [on-line](#) and by [mail or fax](#) until February 28, 2007. Submissions received after the January 31st deadline will be summarized and posted on the Assembly's [web site](#) but won't be added to the report on consultation themes that was prepared by the Secretariat.

The Assembly has received about 1,000 written submissions so far. These submissions – along with the comments people made at consultation meetings – will help to fuel members' discussions as we work together to form a recommendation for the future of Ontario's electoral system. Don't miss this chance to add your views to this historic process!

The Ballot Box with Dr. Rose



Electoral systems are in some sense about choice. A question that designers of electoral systems must ask is: how much choice is appropriate for the voter? What happens if a voter wants none of the choices on the ballot? This little known issue is related to the democratic principle of voter choice. Such a provision allows voters to indicate that the choices offered do not meet their needs. Some ballots can accommodate this ballot design variation, sometimes called "none of the above" or NOTA. Others have no provision for this.

In Ontario, for example, a voter can decline a ballot and 2631 citizens chose this option in the 2003 election. Only in a few jurisdictions is the choice of NOTA made explicit. In Catalonia, Spain voters are given the option of a "white ballot" to indicate that they choose none of the above, and a similar provision existed in the former Soviet Union. In national elections in Canada, however, no such provision exists. Rejected ballots are those which are declined by the voter as well as those which are left blank or improperly marked. Like all elements of electoral system design, the absence and existence of features give us an insight to the values of system designers.

New on our Site

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

- [Deliberation Room](#) (Follow the Assembly's decision-making process!)
- [The Assembly in Action](#) (New photos added!)

Contact Us

Questions or comments about The Ballot? Send an e-mail to: theballot@citizensassembly.gov.on.ca