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The Ballot - April 2007

Welcome to the April issue of The Ballot!

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From the Chair



Ontario's first, and I hope not only, Citizens' Assembly has completed the task it was given. After months of learning, consulting and deliberating this group of extraordinary citizens has designed and chosen to recommend a new electoral system for the province.

From the beginning, this was a principles based exercise. My fellow Assembly members designed a Mixed Member Proportional system for the province based on what they want the system to do for Ontarians: retain strong local representation while providing more voter choice and proportional results.

Now it's your turn to decide whether our current system does what you think an electoral system should do, or you think it's time for a change. I invite you to take advantage of the materials on our site to help inform your decision.

At our final meeting this weekend, the Assembly will work together to approve our final report which we'll deliver to the government on May 15. I hope that will serve as a resource for all Ontarians who will mark a ballot in the referendum next fall.

George Thomson



The Deliberation Phase Continues

Just one weekend meeting remains. Visit our site for a [detailed schedule](#) of what's to come.

A couple of notes about Weekend 6 if you're thinking of attending:

- Minister Bountrogianni is planning to attend the meeting on Saturday to formally recognize the work of the Assembly.
- While plenary discussions are open to the public, the members will be discussing a draft report which will not be made public until May 15th, and smaller group discussions will not be public this weekend.

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. 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.

The Assembly's final report is due May 15, 2007.

The Ballot Box with Dr. Rose



On April 15 the Citizens' Assembly completed its historic task of assessing Ontario's electoral system and deciding whether to recommend a new system for the province. As has been well reported, the members chose Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). They did so because members wanted a system that combined proportionality with local representation.

While all of the elements of their proposed system can be found elsewhere, together they make a unique electoral system that speaks to what this group of citizens value. For example, their system has a province-wide list tier, much like New Zealand's MMP. The Citizens' Assembly chose to add a twist to this, requiring parties to file their lists, and the process used to nominate the list candidates with an independent, neutral body such as Elections Ontario. Local seats in their model comprise 70% of the legislature – suggesting the importance that they placed on this type of representation. Of other MMP systems, Wales comes closest with 67% of the seats being local (though some German provinces have 70% local seats). The members chose the simplest and most proportional formula (known as the "Hare formula") for the allocation of seats – similar to Germany. The number of seats in the proposed legislature is the same as Scotland at 129. And finally, list seats are chosen through a 'closed list' which is the norm in all MMP countries.

While the Assembly's final report will provide a full explanation of these design elements, the diversity of choices they made shows that they looked widely at MMP systems in order to come up with one that reflected what they believe best represents Ontario's reality. And it speaks well of how seriously they took their task.

Public Issues Forum

A Toronto-based Centre for Ethics will host a Public Issues Forum on the Assembly's recommendation on Thursday May 24, 2007 from 3 to 5 pm. Speakers in a roundtable, chaired by Amit Ron, include: Assembly Chair George Thomson, John Ferejohn, Joseph Heath, Andrew Stark and Melissa Williams.

The event is open to the public. Visit the [Centre's site](#) to learn more.

New on our Site

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

- [An outline of the Assembly's recommended system](#) (pdf)
- [Deliberation Room](#) (More materials added!)
- [The Assembly in Action](#) (More photos on-line!)

Contact Us

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