



Queen's Park Report

Learn About Your Choice In the October 10th Ontario Referendum

Elections Ontario has established a new website to inform voters about the about their choices in Ontario's first-ever referendum on electoral reform to be held in conjunction with the regular vote electing MPPs in each of Ontario's 107 ridings. This website is found at www.yourbigdecision.ca.

Check out the interactive video at http://www.yourbigdecision.ca/en_ca/Media.aspx. This simple and easy to use online video will walk you through the question, the two electoral systems you are being asked to consider, what to expect on October 10th and a whole lot more.

The choice will be between two systems: 1) the current **first-past-the-post** system which has created problems in the past for voters who, by casting a vote for a third or fourth party, can actually help elect the candidate of their last-choice party; or 2) the **mixed member proportional** system proposed by the Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform which would give each voter two votes, one for the local candidate of their choice (89 in total) and one for the party of their choice which would be used to allocate 39 additional members from party lists to ensure that the final number of candidates elected for each party reflects the percentage of the popular vote received by that party.

The Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods of Ontario (F.U.N.) has endorsed the mixed member proportional system proposed by the Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform.

F.U.N. has long been concerned that the first-past-the-post system provides no real opportunities for minority parties such as the Green Party to gain even one seat in the Legislature even though they may have significant popular support. In addition, F.U.N. has been troubled that a person voting for a third or fourth party candidate under the first-past-the-post system can find that their vote counts for nothing and has in real terms been discarded. Under the **mixed member proportional** system, this is corrected by the second vote for the party of your choice when all votes in fact do count.

In order to prevent nuisance parties from cluttering up the Legislature, the Citizen's Assembly has wisely recommended that a party must garner at least 3 per cent of the party vote before it would be entitled to be awarded a seat in the Legislation under the new system.

One criticism of the proposed **mixed member proportional** system is that it will increase the number of MPPs from 107 to 129 and that will cost more. However, as we found when Premier Mike Harris reduced the number of MPPs from 130 to 103, costs actually went up. It seems that you need more highly paid staff to replace elected politicians and it is the staff that is really expensive.

For the October 10th election, it may be some time into the next morning before the final results of the referendum are known. The referendum votes will be counted in each riding after the votes for the individual candidates are tabulated. In addition, the Liberal Government has decreed that, in order for the new system to become law, it will need a "super majority" of at least 60 per cent of all votes cast and at least 50 per cent of the ballots in at least 64 of the 107 ridings. It is truly ironic that a referendum in Quebec to determine if that province would separate from Canada apparently required only a 50 per cent plus one majority to succeed.

It seems unfair that, if only 40 per cent plus one of the total vote and 50 per cent of the ballots cast in only 44 of the 107 ridings are in favour of the **first-past-the-post** system, this would ensure the continuance of an electoral system that most people had rejected. For the new **mixed member proportional** system to be approved, a simple majority should have been sufficient.

Because of the high requirement for the mixed member proportional system to be approved, the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods of Ontario strongly urges all who would like to see the new system become law to vote and urge all your friends and neighbours to cast their ballots in favour of a fairer electoral system for Ontario.

Please e-mail a copy of this Report to anyone that you think might be interested.

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