

The Quiet Referendum: Why Electoral Reform Failed in Ontario

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Ontario's 2007 referendum on electoral reform, which resulted in the retention of the present first-past-the-post electoral system, was the culmination of a multi-layered exercise in deliberative and participatory democracy. Although the proposed electoral system reform was rejected in the October 10th referendum, the process that led to that outcome was nevertheless an important experiment in involving citizens directly in a major political decision making process, both in providing for deliberation of the issue by a body of ordinary citizens and in reserving the final decision on the issue to the voters. In this paper, we examine the sequence of events from the beginning in the commissioning of a Citizens' Assembly by the Ontario government, the process of deliberation that took place over the eight months that the Assembly met, its recommendation for a change in the electoral system used in provincial elections in Ontario, the structure of the referendum campaign that followed, and the voting outcome.¹ A detailed comparative analysis of this important experiment in both deliberative and direct democracy can teach us much about the strengths and limitations of citizen engagement in institutional reform, but also about the challenges in communication that such a process involves. This analysis will begin with a review of a successful case of reform in New Zealand, highlighting how complicated and difficult electoral reform can be, thereby placing the task of reform in a wider context. We will then turn our attention to understanding the principle and aims underlying the construction of deliberative forums, and compare both the British Columbia Assembly and Ontario assemblies as models of citizen deliberation. From there we will turn our attention to an examination of public opinion and the role of the media in the framing of the public discourse. Finally, we will conclude with an overview of the referendum outcome and its implications.

We will argue that even though the recommended change was rejected by over 60% of the voting public, the deliberative experiment was a success, as it delivered on its principal objectives of social representation, citizen engagement, and respectful deliberation. Unfortunately, there was little support, or discussion surrounding the Assembly process itself, as very few citizens were even aware of this experiment, and fewer still understood the objectives of this exercise. The Assembly's recommendations were also not widely discussed nor well understood by the public at large. Unlike previous raucous referendum debates in this country, this one was quiet. And, while much work remains to be done with respect to grafting new forms of public engagement onto existing elite models, the Citizens' Assembly process which took place in Ontario, together with the Assembly conducted earlier in British Columbia are both likely to have a lasting impact on our thinking about the possibilities and limitations inherent of this new and still relatively untested form of public participation.²

1. The authors would like to thank Saman Chamanfar, and Tyler Sommers, for their work on various parts of this project; Peter Macleod for his comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper; Joe Murray of Fair Vote Canada for making available the StratCom poll data; Rick Anderson of Fireweed Democracy project for making available the Fireweed Barometer data; Joseph Fletcher, André Turcotte and Neil Nevitte for their suggestions in designing the research; and most importantly the fifteen members of the Citizens' Assembly who consented to interviews, as well as the opinion leaders who also participated and shared their insights with us.

2. See Mark E. Warren and Hilary Pearse (eds.), *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Electoral reform is perhaps the ideal type of issue for which to consider an alternative type of democratic process. Such matters cannot easily be discussed or debated within the normal structures of parliamentary politics. Governments typically see proposals for institutional change either as threats to their position, or sometimes as opportunities to advance a partisan agenda. In the former case, proposals that are put forward by organizations or groups outside of government are easily ignored or sidelined. The Martin Government, for example, did not act on the recommendations put forward by the Law Commission, even though the government was vocally committed to addressing the democratic deficit and had itself commissioned the report.³ In Britain, the Jenkins Commission report met a similar fate. However, when governments do decide to act on a reform proposal, they often do so from a perspective of gaining political advantage over their opponents. Recent struggles over the electoral law in Italy, for example, illustrate this aspect of the problem, as to some degree does the debate on electoral reform in Quebec. The long running saga of Senate reform in Canada contains elements of both of these extremes, demonstrating not only that institutional reform is difficult to accomplish, but also that it is equally difficult to insulate it from partisan politics. Opposition parties often express support for reforms while they are in opposition, then lose interest in the same ideas when they are in government, as their success to some degree was tied to the electoral system that enabled it.

The solution to this problem has long been thought to lie in turning these complex issues over to a body which can act independently of government. Among parliamentary systems in the British tradition, a royal commission has typically been the vehicle chosen to undertake deliberation of major reform proposals. While royal commissions may bring great expertise to the process of deliberation, they are sorely lacking in one essential ingredient – democratic legitimacy. Attempts have been made to compensate for this limitation by conducting extensive public hearings, as demonstrated by the Spicer Commission in the early 1990s. But the royal commission model is fundamentally a top-down process, empowering elites rather than citizens. This perhaps would have been an acceptable means of resolving conflicts of interest in the past, but times and attitudes have changed. Conceptions of sovereignty which place power in the hands of the people have become mainstays in representative democracies worldwide, particularly when the issue involves constitutional matters, or in this case the rules governing the most fundamental democratic institution – elections.⁴ Scholars and politicians now not only argue for referenda as a means of citizen involvement, they also argue for some form of engagement or accommodation of ordinary citizens in debates that take place *during* the policy creation stage.⁵ Yet grafting new forms of popular participation onto a previously elite driven

3. *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform in Canada* (Ottawa, Ministry of Public Works and Government Services, 2004).

4. Peter H., Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, third edition, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto), 1992. Chapter 1. See also Jane Jenson and Susan Phillips. “Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada”, *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 14: 111-136 (1996).

5. See Matthew Mendelsohn, “Public Brokerage: Constitutional Reform and the Accommodation of Mass Publics”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33:245-272 (June 2000). Or, more recently, Matthew Mendelsohn, Andrew Parkin (with Alex Van Kralingen), “Getting from Here to There: A Process for Electoral Reform in Canada”, in Paul Howe, Richard Johnston, and André Blais (eds.), *Strengthening Canadian Democracy* (Montreal: Institute for Research in Public Policy, 2005). Both arguments were made by the Deputy Minister prior to taking the position with the Ontario government, and the latter resembles the Assembly process quite closely, albeit somewhat more tempered by elite influence.

process is not easy, even when the process is initiated or managed by elites.⁶ The New Zealand case, often cited over the course of the electoral reform debate in Ontario, demonstrates many of these difficulties.

New Zealand: a case of successful reform

Institutional reform involving substantial public participation is not simple, and it can be a lengthy and complex process. In New Zealand, the electoral reform debate began in earnest in the early 1980s, following two successive elections in which the party winning the largest number of votes failed to obtain a majority of parliamentary seats.⁷ Labour included a commitment to appoint a royal commission on electoral reform in its 1984 campaign platform. Elected with a solid parliamentary majority, the new Labour government appointed such a commission during its first year in office. Following extensive research and public hearings, the commission recommended that New Zealand adopt an MMP electoral system. Recognizing that a parliament dominated by the major parties might be hesitant to implement such a sweeping change, the commission also recommended that a referendum be held on the issue.⁸

There was widespread doubt that such a referendum would ever take place, since there was no constitutional mechanism in New Zealand which could force a governing party to call one. Not surprisingly, there were divisions within the Labour caucus regarding the wisdom of a switch to *any* form of proportional representation, despite the party's previous commitment to electoral reform. In the 1987 and 1990 election campaigns the recommendations of the royal commission, and the question of calling a referendum, became caught up in party politics. As both major parties attempted to manipulate the issue to their own advantage, they gradually lost control of the reform agenda.⁹ Throughout this period, an influential lobby group, the Electoral Reform Coalition, continued to press for implementation of the royal commission's proposals. Labour reiterated its promise of a referendum on electoral reform during its 1987 election campaign. But although returned to power, the Labour government was unable or unwilling to proceed further on the matter due to its own internal divisions. Sensing Labour's vulnerability on the issue, the National opposition criticized the government's inaction, and promised its own referendum on electoral reform during the course of the 1990 election campaign. Although there was even less support for proportional representation, or for a referendum, among National

6. Grace Skogstad, "Who Governs, Who Should Govern? Political Authority and Legitimacy in Canada in the Twenty-First Century," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36: 955-973 (2003). See also Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*.

7. In the 1978 election, Labour won 40.4% of the vote and 42 seats, while National formed the government with 39.8% of the vote and 54 seats. In 1981, Labour won 39.0% of the total vote and 45 seats, compared with 38.8% and 49 seats for National, which again formed the government..

8. Report of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform, *Towards a Better Democracy* (Wellington, 1986).

9. Peter Aimer refers to these events as the "politics of miscalculation". Peter Aimer, "From Westminster Plurality to Continental Proportionality: Electoral System Change in New Zealand", in Henry Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count* (Toronto, Broadview, 1999).

parliamentarians than among those of Labour, the new National government elected in 1990 was, like its predecessor, stuck with a rashly made campaign promise.

The new government did in fact go forward with a non-binding referendum, which was held in September of 1992. Perhaps hoping to take the steam out of the electoral reform movement, the ballot contained four alternatives: the mixed member proportional (MMP) system recommended by the royal commission, the additional member system (AMS) advocated by a parliamentary committee, the single transferable vote system (STV) used in Ireland, and in the Australian upper house, and the alternative vote (AV), used in the Australian lower house. Given four complicated options from which to choose, it appeared unlikely that any one of them could possibly win broad public support. On the ballot, voters were also asked in a separate question whether they favoured change or preferred to retain the existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. To oversee the campaign, the government appointed a panel chaired by the Ombudsman. In addition to ensuring fairness, this panel was charged with the task of educating the public regarding the alternatives presented. It issued a six page brochure (delivered to every household) which described in some detail each of the voting systems appearing on the ballot. In addition to the pamphlet, the panel sponsored various other publications, television programs, and seminars designed to provide information to the public. Concurrently with these activities, the Electoral Reform Coalition waged an active campaign on behalf of the MMP alternative, stressing the fact that this was the system originally recommended by the royal commission. The government was stunned when New Zealanders voted overwhelmingly for change (84.7%) and also indicated a clear and overwhelming preference (70.5%) for the MMP alternative. Such a result could not be ignored, yet MMP was not implemented. The government instead brought in legislation to hold a second binding referendum on reform to coincide with the next general election, due in a year's time. That referendum would be a straight run-off between MMP and the existing first-past-the-post system. While the Electoral Reform Coalition urged immediate implementation of MMP without a second referendum, it soon became clear that the government intended to stage at least one more battle against it.

Given the decisive results of the 1992 referendum, and the political atmosphere which followed in its wake, the second (1993) referendum might have been anticlimactic. Yet the campaign itself was hard fought, and the outcome could in no way be taken for granted. The various groups which had opposed the reform proposals at earlier stages, including prominent figures in both major parties, came together under an umbrella organization called the Campaign for Better Government to fight the proposed reform. This organization enjoyed considerable support from the business community, which feared the prospect of coalition government under MMP, and its possible effects on economic policy. The anti-MMP campaign waged under the banner of the CBG was better organized and more sophisticated than previous efforts, and it had the tacit support of the government. However, the country's largest newspaper (the *Auckland Herald*) endorsed the MMP proposal, and the referendum received extensive and largely favourable press coverage.¹⁰ Because the 1993 referendum was held to coincide with the general election, a higher turnout could be expected and partisan voters more easily mobilized.¹¹ The outcome of the 1993 New Zealand referendum (53.9% for MMP)

10. Jack Vowles, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand", *International Political Science Review* 16: 95-115 (January 1995).

11. Turnout in the first (1992) referendum was 55%. In the second (1993) referendum, which coincided with the general election, it was 85%.

demonstrated that the campaign was in every respect a real campaign, and that the outcome was never a foregone conclusion. The referendum law had been written so that MMP automatically came into effect upon its approval by the electorate. It quickly became clear that no further parliamentary review was legally possible, although the government briefly floated the idea of referring the matter once again back to the parliamentary committee. Governments may have many levers of power at their disposal, but once an issue is placed in front of the people outcomes become more unpredictable. In the analysis following, we will draw a number of comparisons between the process as it evolved in Ontario and the New Zealand case as described above, as in almost every respect (other than employing a referendum and debating the same topic), Ontario was different. We will also compare Ontario with the British Columbia experiment in our analysis as, driven by the popular sovereignty ethos, BC was in many respects more similar to the experience in Ontario.

Ontario: constructing a process of public deliberation

In Ontario, the initiative on electoral reform was first proposed by the Liberal party at the time that they were in opposition. The impetus for the proposal was, at least in part, the experience of the province under two previous governments – NDP (1990-95) and Progressive-Conservative (1995-2003). The NDP government of Bob Rae had won a majority of seats in the 1990 election with only 38% of the total popular vote. The government of Mike Harris, elected in 1995 with 45% of the vote, initiated a program of sweeping changes in public services, including health and education and municipal government. As in New Zealand, a feeling developed that both of these governments lacked a sufficient democratic mandate to justify their actions. Yet, under the FPTP system, any majority government wields nearly absolute powers, no matter how thin its electoral plurality. Elected in 2003 with a majority of seats won with 46% of the popular vote, the Liberals' commitment to electoral reform might have been suspect. However, having been widely criticized for breaking other campaign promises, the McGuinty government was likely sensitive to potential criticism on this issue. It did not however move very quickly to initiate a debate on electoral reform. Three years into its mandate, and already looking forward to the next provincial election, the government announced that it would commission a Citizens' Assembly to study the issue of electoral reform.¹² The Citizens' Assembly would have the power to make a recommendation to be put to a referendum coinciding with the next provincial election.

In addition to fulfilling a campaign promise, the government was undoubtedly influenced by the process that had unfolded in British Columbia two years earlier, and by the electoral reform debate which had been taking place at the federal level and in other provinces. There were however substantial contextual differences between the setting in Ontario and the forces that had been driving the electoral reform debate elsewhere. At the federal level, a number of elections displaying substantial regional distortions of the vote, together with the rise of the Bloc Québécois, had revived interest in alternative electoral models. In British Columbia, a "wrong winner" election (1996) followed by another (2001) that decimated the main opposition party highlighted the disadvantages of the first-past-the post model. Similarly in New Brunswick and PEI, long histories of distorted election results that heavily overstated the position of the winning

12. The government announced the creation of the Citizens' Assembly on August 19, 2005. It had previously adopted fixed dates for provincial elections, specifying that the next election would be held on October 10, 2007.

party served to maintain an interest in electoral reform that was relatively independent of partisanship.

In Ontario, aside from the controversial legacy of the Harris and Rae governments, the case for electoral reform was on the surface less compelling than that at the federal level or in other provinces that had conducted serious debates on the issue. It was never entirely clear whether the McGuinty government's initiative was driven by a desire to reform the electoral system, or by an interest in experimenting with a new model of citizen deliberation – or both. During the Liberals' years in opposition, both ideas were attractive. Setting up the Citizens' Assembly fulfilled a campaign promise and allowed the government to showcase its democratic credentials by empowering a body of ordinary citizens to consider a major issue of institutional change. But, as events would later disclose, the commitment to electoral reform itself on the part of the Liberals was perhaps considerably weaker. As has been the case with most governing parties that have confronted this issue, internal divisions and partisan self-interest would prove difficult to overcome.¹³ Some prominent cabinet ministers spoke publicly in favour of reform, whereas others were silent, and the Premier did not take a position on behalf of the government. And yet in fairness, taking a position in support of the Assembly recommendation could have been potentially problematic, both for the government and for the credibility of the Assembly, as the government could then have been accused of designing the Assembly simply to produce a desired outcome. Nevertheless the deliberation process which took place prior to the recommendation could have been sold as the feel good event of the year as it engaged a cross-section of the public in the discussion of fundamental issues of representation. It was a revolutionary experiment in democratic citizen engagement – one the first of its kind in the world.

The Citizens' Assembly as a deliberative instrument

Theoretically, deliberative forums are designed to address deficits in representative democracy, or more specifically, to serve as a stop gap to support and restore legitimacy where contentious public policy initiatives or constitutional change involves conflict over conceptions of moral value.¹⁴ Shielded from the political arena, by design “mini publics”¹⁵ are intentionally housed outside the cut and thrust of everyday politics, and not tainted by partisan whim or self

13. Part way through the process, a 60% threshold for a positive outcome was introduced, leaving skeptics to wonder if the government was genuinely interested in electoral reform or was instead attempting to guarantee its failure. However, the 60% threshold was consistent with what had been required in British Columbia, and there are certainly arguments on both sides of this issue. Nevertheless, the Secretariat staff and Citizen Assembly members had signed on to this process without this requirement having yet been established.

14. Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, (NY, Routledge, 2003). p. 177. The issue of legitimacy is discussed more extensively by Simone Chambers in “Deliberative Democratic Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6: 307-326 (2003).

15. Deliberative conceptions using the term, “mini public” can be found in the work of Mark Warren, and elsewhere throughout the literature on deliberative democracy. See Mark Warren, “Citizen Participation and Democratic Representation”, paper presented to the Conference on Citizen Participation in the EU and Canada: Challenges and Change, Carleton University, May 2007.

interest, nor are the solutions which they generate. Instead, as Simone Chambers notes, their proposed solutions are more likely to be products of informed dialogue where “participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants.”¹⁶ There is no partisan whip to control the vote, and no election to be won by Assembly members. Through the spirit of consensus and compromise, which can be lost in competitive “vote centric”¹⁷ environments such as a parliament or legislature, deliberation is designed to tackle problems of division or conflict by placing power in the hands of everyday citizens, thereby restoring democratic legitimacy that is often lost in processes that are the domain of elites.¹⁸ With self interest and party pressure removed, delegates are (in theory) more likely to entertain opposing views and reach conclusions that are more inclusive and reflective as a result. Deliberation theory seems to masterfully address many of the shortfalls of the representative system, while maintaining or enhancing its integrity and virtue.

All the same, deliberative practice is not without its problems. Even though deliberation is in part designed to engage citizens in problem solving, critics voice a range of concerns central to democratic theory, representative democracy, and the viability of the deliberation process itself. These challenges include reservations regarding the construction of a true “mini public”, representativeness, process and accountability. As these forums are largely designed constructed, and managed by elites, they cannot so easily escape elite maneuvering. In situations that are largely self selective, critics wonder if it is possible to confirm that representative legitimacy is maintained, or even to know that those who are responsible to deliberate on our behalf are relatively representative of the larger body politic.¹⁹ Similarly, reviewing components of the deliberative process, how can we be certain that the layman has the capacity to reason, understand and navigate complex political debates adequately?²⁰ And how can their ability to judge be assisted or evaluated? Can ordinary citizens behave like or become experts? In deliberative “talk centric”²¹ forums, where individuals range widely in their ability to articulate, how can equality of voice be ensured?²² Moreover, how would we determine

16. Simone Chambers, “Deliberative Democratic Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6: 307-326 (2003). p.309.

17. *Ibid*, p.308.

18. Matthew Mendelsohn, “Public Brokerage: Constitutional Reform and the Accommodation of Mass Publics”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33: 245-272 (June 2000).

19 Grace Skogstad, “Who Governs, Who Should Govern? Political Authority and Legitimacy in Canada in the Twenty-First Century, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36: 955-973 (December 2003).

20. Although not applied to Citizens’ Assembly forums per se, for challenges to capacity see Simon Jackman and Paul M. Sniderman, “The Limits of Deliberative Discussion: A Model of Everyday Political Arguments”, *Journal of Politics*, 68: 272-283 (May 2006).

21. Simone Chambers, “Deliberative Democratic Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6: 307-326 (2003).

22. Although not directly an attack on deliberative theory, for a discussion of citizen equality in such discourse see Sidney Verba, “Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn Out to be a Nightmare?”, *Perspectives on Politics* 1: 633-679 (2003).

if all perspectives are being respected through dialogue?²³ Or, how do we bring this diverse body to a point of consensus without resorting to majoritarian rule or practice?²⁴ Finally, with respect to accountability, what means could we employ to hold this group to account for the decisions that they make? After all they are not directly elected or responsible to the public for the decisions that they make. Answering these heavy charges and a thorough review of the deliberative literature and its nuances are well beyond the scope of this project.²⁵ However, many of these criticisms are recognized and addressed in the design and construction of the Ontario experiment in practice. Therefore, to examine these challenges, we begin with a review of the original Citizens' Assembly process as it unfolded in British Columbia.

A new model: the BC Citizens' Assembly

Just as the conception of deliberative democracy was not created in a vacuum, and was a response to problems generated by deficits in representative democracy, the form of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly was not entirely new. The Ontario Assembly was for the most part modeled after the British Columbia Assembly, which was the original experiment in deliberative practice of this type. The British Columbia Assembly was initiated in September 2002, when, shortly after taking office, the newly elected premier, Gordon Campbell, appointed Gordon Gibson to recommend the structure and function of such a forum. By the end of December that same year, Gibson had completed his task. In April of the following year, the Legislature unanimously approved a motion to support the creation of an Assembly. This vote would mark the beginning of the selection, learning, consultation, deliberation and referendum phases that would follow. Importantly, as it was recognized that any change to the electoral process must be legitimized by the public, and that this Assembly group may have been tasked with the responsibility of making a recommendation, it was acknowledged that they did not have the requisite authority to speak exclusively for the people. By design, the deliberative forum was to be followed by a referendum, where the voting public would be able to directly weigh in on the Assembly decision themselves. This referendum process answered critics' concerns over accountability, placing ultimate legitimacy in the hands of the people – not the mini public.

With respect to issues of representativeness, the initial selection phase of the BC Assembly involved principles of random selection, where letters of invitation and information packages were sent to 15,800 people across BC. Those interested were then organized by constituency and after a random draw 20 people per riding were invited to selection meetings. After a detailed briefing, selectees attending the meetings were then asked to declare their interest and confirm eligibility. Names were then drawn from a hat, giving each member an equal chance of being chosen and adhering to principles of random selection accordingly. There was a modest attempt at stratification however, as the Assembly was comprised of one male and one female from each of the 79 ridings in British Columbia, plus an additional two members

23. Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative vs. Participatory Democracy*. (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

24. For theoretical concerns see, Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, (NY, Routledge, 2003), Chapter 9 "Radical Pluralism".

25. For a concise review of these concepts, see Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 :307-326 (2003).

with native status, and age was also taken into consideration ensuring representation of those under 35. Notably, there was some element of self selection, as members were required to agree to the terms of participation. As this would involve a serious dedication over many weekends (an extraordinary commitment by anyone's standards) this group could not be considered entirely ordinary. Moreover, selection of members based on geographic or constituency representation could have predisposed Assembly participants in favour of electoral models which maintained elements of local representation accordingly, and potentially biased the outcome as a result. This is important. Yet, not ensuring that all regions were at the table would be problematic for representation as well, as regional concerns vary, and some electoral systems go farther in the protection of rural community representation than others. Nevertheless, as random selection was involved and geographic regions were represented equally, the Assembly could be regarded as relatively representative of the desired mini public in almost every respect except for bias toward geographic representation and the motivation level of participants. It took almost six months to assemble the 160 members randomly from across the province and although the group was not perfectly reflective of the public, it came very close, passing a critical hurdle of representativeness. On January 10, 2004, the group began their learning phase.

A large commitment was made to both the process and technical education of Assembly members. The education process began with the construction and adoption of 'shared values' which would be used to guide conduct throughout the discussion. These values included; a commitment to respect people and their opinions, open mindedness; challenging ideas not people, listening to understand; focus on mandate; preparedness; simple, clear, concise communication; inclusivity; all members are equal; positive attitude and integrity.²⁶ The mandate for the Assembly was confined to the manner by which voters' ballots are translated into elected members, and would not include other suggestions for democratic reform. However, if a recommendation for change should be put forward, the Assembly must consider the potential effect of its recommended model on the government, the Legislative Assembly and the political parties. Therefore, the learning phase not only covered the five families of electoral systems, but critically was centered around the values which would be demonstrated or supported through the employment of each system, or the consequent impact of change on electoral outcomes. The nine values used to assess electoral systems were those that the Law Commission had identified in their report on electoral reform.²⁷ These values were; stable government; electoral accountability; local representation; democratic parties; participation; equal votes; parliamentary scrutiny; fairness of representation; and voter choice.²⁸ This value centered approach was integral to the principles of deliberation, and was used by the Assembly to evaluate and assess the merit and possible benefit or effect of any electoral change.

26. BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

< http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/learning_resources/recommended_reading>

27 Amy Lang, . "But Is It For Real? The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly as a Model of State Sponsored Citizen Empowerment", *Politics and Society* 35: 35-70 (2007).

28. BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

< http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/learning_resources/recommended_reading>

However, electoral engineering involves trade offs, as value priorities clash and no single system design upholds all values equally. Evaluating the current system and or redesigning an electoral system can be a difficult task as electoral systems are highly complex entities. As a result, the technical learning phase spanned six Assembly sessions - each taking place every other weekend from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Experts were brought in to teach the merits and consequences of each system. Smaller group discussion followed presentations allowing for concerns and questions to be addressed and debated by those who were perhaps less comfortable discussing concerns in the larger forum, thereby enabling a greater degree of equality between speakers. A members' only web forum (used to discuss issues and to share resources throughout the process) also served the same purpose.²⁹ All together the Assembly spent twelve days in learning sessions. During this phase members of the Assembly were also encouraged to access a wide range of sources including: David Farrell's *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*; the IDEA *Electoral Systems Handbook*; Blais and Masicotte's "Electoral Systems", the Richard Commission Report (The Welsh report recommending STV), *Changed Voting Changed Politics: Lessons of Britain's Experience of PR since 1997*, and the Law Commission's 2004 report (*Voting Counts: Electoral Reform in Canada*).³⁰ Every effort was made to ensure that Assembly members had access to, and clearly understood, the differences between electoral system mechanics and the values which would be supported or affected by each system. In essence, over the six week period, Assembly members became expert, and their learning also continued to develop throughout the consultation phase which followed.

The public consultation phase included public hearings and on-line and written submissions. Between May and June, Assembly members attended over 50 public hearings. Members who were not in attendance were provided with summaries, and a committee reviewed presentations and invited nine presenters who were deemed of special merit to present to the entire Assembly. In total 1603 written submissions were also accepted and made available to all Assembly members. This was an important step as it allowed Assembly members to evaluate different perspectives held by the public, and although submissions and presentations are often made by those who may be more engaged with the issue of electoral reform than the general public (and therefore are less representative), the concerns expressed are no less valuable. The consultation phase presentations led into the ranking of values which were to be debated in the six weeks of deliberation.³¹

The three values that the BC Assembly deemed most important in its deliberation were; fairness of representation (seat share in the Legislature reflects share of votes); local representation (communities represented locally by elected MLAs); and voter choice, (voters have more options on the ballot, and thus more power). During the deliberation phase alternative models were constructed in detail and evaluated by the Assembly. By week four of

29. Amy Lang.. "But Is It For Real? The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly as a Model of State Sponsored Citizen Empowerment", *Politics and Society* 35: 35-70 (2007).

30. "Recommended Reading". BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.
< http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/learning_resources/recommended_reading>

31. BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.
< http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/learning_resources/recommended_reading>

the deliberation phase, members voted to recommend changing the current first past the post system to the STV (single transferable vote) model as members believed that it most reflected their shared values.³² This recommendation was then put to the people in a referendum, as it would be also in Ontario. In the BC referendum, held to coincide with the provincial election of May 17, 2005, 57.7% of those participating (55.8% of the eligible electorate)³³ voted YES to the question “*Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform?*”. The result therefore fell just short of the 60% threshold which had been specified.³⁴

The Ontario Citizens’ Assembly

The idea of pursuing some kind of electoral reform was introduced in Ontario by Dalton McGuinty on November 9, 2001. He was the opposition leader at the time.³⁵ Although other democratic initiatives were initiated by the Liberal government (elected in October 2003), it would not be until August 2005 (more than two years after forming the government) that the Assembly plan was officially unveiled by the government.³⁶ The Assembly began its work a year later. In many respects the Ontario Assembly process was identical to the process in BC. Members were randomly selected, careful consideration was given to the education, consultation and deliberation processes in support of principles of deliberative democracy as demonstrated in British Columbia. But there were differences also. With respect to representativeness, the Ontario Assembly had a total of 103 members, one from each of 103 ridings (with 50% of the ridings being represented by women and 50% by men) and one native member. Both assembly bodies were similarly diverse in their demographic makeup, with regional representation and age being reflected; however the BC Assembly was larger. This may have had an impact on the quality of discussion, even though principles of representativeness were constant. Notable differences emerged in some of the other phases as well.

The education phase, which lasted from September through November 2006, included lectures, reading, panel discussions, simulations, and frequent small group discussions of electoral systems and related topics. A number of the plenary lectures were given by the Academic Director of the Assembly, Jonathan Rose, while others were by visiting academics and other guests. Academic lecturers included Political Scientists such as André Blais, Heather MacIvor, Jennifer Smith, Louis Massicotte, Ken Carty and Sarah Birch, among many others.

32. 146 members voted yes, to 7 who were opposed. BC Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform. <http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/extra/deliberation_weekend4.xml>

33. Compared with turnout of 57.8% in the election – a net “drop off” of 2.0%.

34. There will be a second referendum on the issue at the time of the next provincial election, scheduled for May 2009.

35. Robert Benzie, “Making the vote more democratic; Bountrogianni asked to implement an old McGuinty promise”, *Toronto Star* Aug 20, 2005. p. F.2

36. Other initiatives include fixed election dates which were successful and attempts at electoral finance reform, which were less so, and subsequently fell from the government agenda.

The first difference in the learning phase was in the material provided. The BC Assembly was given a wider selection of reports (see above). Further, while both Assemblies were given the Law Commission's 2004 report (*Voting Counts: Electoral Reform in Canada*), this was the only literature that directly made a recommendation (recommending MMP at the federal level), and indeed it was one of the first documents that the Ontario Citizens' Assembly members received. The difference in recommendations is especially relevant as they are value based reports and perhaps more likely to have had a direct impact on framing the discussion. A second variation between the Assembly learning phases was the fact that the BC process occurred, by design, entirely without the influence of political actors. This was not the case in Ontario, which was designed to include a presentation by former parliamentarians; one from each official political party.³⁷ According to Jonathan Rose (the Academic Director of the Ontario Assembly), the "Work World of Parliament" presentation was added in order to "put a face to the oft-maligned work of politicians. It reinforced the importance of constituency work and it showed that the work of an MPP involves considerable trade-offs not only in terms of policy vs. constituency work but also in terms of party vs. personal preferences."³⁸ "Politics 101" sessions were also added during the weekends in Ontario in order that members who were less knowledgeable about politics in general and government structures could be better equipped to place electoral reform in a wider context. A final key difference in the learning process between the two assemblies was the inclusion of working groups in the Ontario Assembly. The Ontario Assembly included four working groups that presented on the final weekend of the learning phase. These were women and underrepresented groups, political parties, government stability, and geographic representation. The working groups served to keep these specific issues further up on the agenda than they had been in the BC Assembly; especially that of women's representation. Amy Lang argues that in the BC Assembly, women's representation was more difficult to advocate for because there *were too many* women in the Assembly to caucus effectively.³⁹ A fifth working group was also established to focus on ancillary issues which they deemed important to include in the final report.⁴² In addition to the working groups on substantive issues, the Ontario Citizens' Assembly also added four advisory committees on process issues: final report, consultation submissions, deliberation planning and monitoring and evaluation.⁴⁰ The addition of these groups, active at relevant points during the process, may have allowed Ontario Assembly members to be more self-reflective of their process.

Following the learning phase, both Citizen Assemblies consulted widely with the public during a two-month consultation phase. In Ontario the consultation phase, which began in late November and continued through January, involved public meetings throughout the province at which citizens could make presentations to a group of Assembly members and discuss issues and principles of representation and related topics. The consultation meetings were structured

37. However, no official input was sought from party members whose party had never had a seat in the legislature such as the Green Party.

38. Jonathan Rose, "The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform" *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Vol 30 No 3, (Autumn 2007). p. 4.

39. Amy Lang, "But Is It for Real? The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly as a Model of State-sponsored Citizen Empowerment", *Politics and Society* 35: 35-70 (2007).

40. *Ibid*, pp. 141-142.

in a way similar to British Columbia, with various speakers per meeting allotted ten minutes for a presentation and a few minutes for questions from Assembly members. The Ontario Assembly held 41 public consultation meetings and received 2152 written submissions.⁴¹ In addition to the public consultation phase, the Ontario Citizens' Assembly had two additional consultative elements: special outreach focus groups and a presentation by the Students' Assembly on electoral reform which was funded by the Provincial Ministry of Education and the Trillium Foundation. Four special outreach focus groups were conducted in different parts of the province as a means to broaden the debate to include or hear from those of lower socio-economic status who are often left out of policy development. These groups consisted of low income earners, recent immigrants, and people with disabilities. The reports from the focus groups were made available to all members of the Ontario Assembly at the onset of the deliberation phase. In addition to the focus groups, the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform delivered a copy of their final report to the Assembly. The Students' Assembly was a parallel process for High School students, many of whom were too young to be eligible to participate in the Assembly, and served to engage youth and incorporate the perspective of youth into the consultation process.

After the comprehensive consultation phase, both Citizen Assemblies underwent a deliberation phase that spanned six weekends. The Ontario deliberation phase began in mid-February, and lasted until the Assembly completed its work at its final meeting on April 28th. The first major deliberative task of each Assembly member was to determine the three top values they would use to assess the suitability of any given electoral system for the province. Interestingly, both Assemblies came to the consensus that the three key values that an electoral system needed to reflect were: effective local representation (referred to as 'geographic representation' in Ontario); proportionality; and voter choice. These value priorities were chosen from those provided to the assemblies. Unlike the BC Assembly, the Ontario assembly had the option of adding additional values to those outlined in the Regulation.⁴² Early in the learning phase, they chose to add simplicity and practicality as an additional value that they wanted reflected in an electoral system.. Ultimately, both Assemblies modeled the MMP and STV electoral systems as the two systems which best reflected their key values. The April 1st vote found 75 members in favour of MMP and 25 preferring STV. MMP was seen as the most viable alternative because it retained the concept of one representative per geographic district while adding a list tier to ensure greater proportionality. Although there was some support for STV's ordinal ranking, many members were concerned with how electoral districts would be redesigned to accommodate multimember constituencies. Some members from the North were concerned that, despite having additional members, larger constituencies would be difficult to manage. Also, there were fewer relevant precedents for the STV system than there were for MMP. The Ontario Assembly's early 'tilt' towards MMP came partly from knowledge gained in the education phase, but also because MMP appeared to many to address a wider array of the values held by members or that came through in the consultations. Elizabeth McLeay from New Zealand was one of the visiting lecturers, and many members were keenly interested in the New Zealand experience because it brought empirical rather than purely theoretical evidence into the

41. Citizens' Assembly (Ontario) < <http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca> >.

42. Regulation refers to Ontario Regulation 82/06: Election Act, Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. Accessed through: Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform* (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2007), p.201

discussions. The New Zealand example illustrated that the introduction of MMP would not necessarily sacrifice either accountability or effective government. Assembly members were also aware that Scotland had adopted MMP in its new Parliament, and that the Law Commission had recommended MMP as a model for the federal Parliament.⁴³ It was viewed by many members to be “the best of both worlds.”⁴⁴ This was not the case in BC where Assembly staff recommended that of the two models, they should start by modeling STV as it had fewer design elements, and thus would be easier to design.⁴⁵ This was in contrast to the Ontario process, which held a vote to determine which system should be designed first, and a further vote to determine if a second system should be designed. Ontario chose to look at MMP first, and STV second. The Ontario Assembly thus had more independence in choosing which electoral system to model, and at which point in the process.

The issue of Legislature size and modeling MMP

Selecting MMP as the preferred system to design was only the first step, however, and in some respects the least difficult. To be effective, MMP systems tend to require a larger legislature. Assembly members had been aware from the beginning that increasing the size of the Legislature might present them with a political problem, even though it was clearly within their mandate to do so.⁴⁶ The reduction of the size of the Ontario legislature by the Harris government in 1999 from 130 to 103 seats had been popular with the public at the time, and there was apprehension among many that increasing it substantially might provoke a backlash.⁴⁷ But reducing the number of constituencies to accommodate list seats while maintaining the legislature at its existing size was also unattractive. What the Assembly probably would have preferred would have been to keep the existing constituencies intact, while adding a sufficient number of list seats to attain proportionality.⁴⁸ This would have required a substantially larger body, and although Assembly members were aware that the Ontario Legislature had significantly fewer MPPs per capita compared to other provinces, they were uncomfortable with the prospect of a large increase in its size. Similarly, the Assembly chose not to allow overhangs because of the uncertainty that would add to the issue of legislature size. In the end, perhaps the most difficult decision that the Assembly members made was to reduce the number of constituency seats to 90 within a 129 seat legislature. To the outside observer, a reduction in the number of constituencies from 107 to 90 might have seemed trivial. But for the

43. *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform in Canada* (Ottawa, Ministry of Public Works and Government Services, 2004).

44. Matthew Shugart and Martin Wattenberg, eds. *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

45. Amy Lang, “But is it for Real? The British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly as a Model of State-sponsored Citizen Empowerment” *Politics and Society* 35: 35-70 (2007).

46. As it was not in BC.

47. The bill that reduced the size of the legislature in 1999 was titled the *Fewer Politicians Act*.

48. The number of members was already scheduled to rise to 107 in the 2007 election due to population increase.

Assembly members, it was a painful choice, because it meant altering the existing constituency structure. This might not have been so difficult had it not been for the fact that each Assembly member in fact represented one of those constituencies. The addition of 39 list seats was about the minimum that could have been chosen in order to assure a reasonable degree of proportionality. For many, the limit was argued to be 130, which was the size of the legislature before the 1999 reduction.

There was much debate and discussion on this issue both inside and outside plenary. The Chair of the Assembly, George Thompson, also shared a concern over the marketability of a larger legislature, and conveyed his reservations to the Assembly. The Chair did not instruct Assembly members specifically on what the limit should be, nor did he advise them on decision-making directly. Nevertheless, some Assembly members thought this intervention by Thompson may have influenced the direction of discussion regarding specific MMP design elements, including the decision not to include overhangs in the final design. However, others within the Assembly also believed that salability was an important concern and were persistent in arguing for a more modest size of the legislature, and ultimately they prevailed. The BC Assembly bypassed this heated debate as the Assembly Chair interpreted the mandate, (which made no mention of legislature size), and removed any change in the size of the legislature from discussion. As a consequence, the BC Assembly was working with a legislature fixed at seventy-nine seats, and size was not an issue for debate.

Other issues were contentious, but not quite so difficult. The Assembly decided on a 3% threshold -- lower than both New Zealand and Germany's 5% threshold. This difference ensured greater proportionality and was due partly to the nature of the existing party system in Ontario. The Green Party, for example, had obtained a mere 2.8% of the vote in the preceding (2003) provincial election. It was seen to be a good balance between 'having more parties in the legislature and preventing parties with little public support from winning seats.'⁴⁹ The decision to allow dual candidacy was also heavily debated. In the end, dual candidacy was permitted in part to allow parties the freedom and flexibility to choose a strategy that worked best for them, maximizing the skills of each candidate and respecting the value and role of both list and constituency MPPs. Notably, if a seat became vacant in the list tier, the Assembly decided that the seat would be filled by the next candidate on the party list. The decision that list members should be elected from one province wide list rather than regional lists was also partly a function of the number of limited list members available – there were only 39. The decision that the lists should be closed rather than open spoke to the members' desire to assure that, within a 129 member legislature, the addition of such a small proportional component would achieve at least some of its representative goals, such as improvement in the number of women elected.

Having decided that the MMP model was preferable to both STV and the First Past the Post status quo, the final weekend of deliberation in Ontario was dedicated, in part, to approving both the content and design of the recommendation. Members voted on whether or not to recommend MMP to the people of Ontario. This vote was conducted in order to establish greater consensus within the Assembly. During the second vote, 94 voted in favour of recommending MP to the people of Ontario and 8 voted against.⁵⁰ This result demonstrates that

49. Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat, *Democracy at Work: The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform* (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2007). p. 154.

50. *Ibid*, p. 131

the Assembly had indeed reached widespread consensus. After the vote was held showing approval for the final report, the Assembly burst into applause; months of hard work had finally come to an end.

Although both the BC and Ontario's Citizen Assemblies had numerous similarities and followed a parallel time-line in terms of the length of the phases of the process, it is important to note that the BC process had a longer break between the learning phase and the deliberative phase than the Ontario process did. The BC learning phase process concluded in March of 2004 leaving the assembly members five months between it and the deliberative phase, which started in September of 2004. This is in contrast to the Ontario Assembly that had only a two-and-a-half month break (from November 2006 to January 2007) between the learning and deliberation phases. Gibson argued that the summer break, which was promoted as a 'Summer Reading Break', had a transformative effect on the BC Assembly:

The Ontario citizens' assembly did not have as much time for thought as there was in BC. Our assembly was also initially captivated by MMP, a more easily understood system with much partisan support. But over a summer of reflection, the view shifted massively to STV.⁵¹

It is unclear whether Gibson is correct in his assessment that the summer reading break was a key factor in the BC Assembly's decision-making process. What is clear however, is that both Assemblies supported and roughly adhered to the same principles of deliberative theory, and both probably benefited from the respectful bonds that were created during the process. Deliberation delivered on its mandate in both instances. Nevertheless, in these circumstances small or subtle differences have the potential to effect or shape decision outcomes. Elites still seem to matter in a number of important ways. Selection was random, but not necessarily perfectly reflective of the larger public, and the size of the forum could play a role, as could the elements of geographic representation. So too could differences in the timing and type of materials provided, or the insertion of presentations from political actors, and the effectiveness of working groups as vehicles for lobbying. Knowledge acquisition is rarely neutral. Additionally hearing from the Students' Assembly and special outreach groups could also have exerted some influence in Ontario. Finally, interpretations or concerns articulated by those responsible for managing the Assembly (however limited they were), could be powerful influences in shaping attitudes of the Assembly members. Such influences may have been enough to explain the difference in choices each Assembly made. We cannot know for certain, particularly as both Assemblies were subject to either formal or informal constraints regarding the size of the legislature, yet each Assembly recommended a different electoral model. Likewise, it is perhaps impossible to control all of the factors which might influence any group, and a subject as complicated as electoral reform compounds that difficulty. However, the people involved do not make decisions in a vacuum, or from an entirely blank slate.⁵²

51. Gordon Gibson, "STV Trumps MMP", *The Globe and Mail*, Oct 8, 2007.

52. Simon Jackman and Paul, M. Sniderman, "The Limits of Deliberative Discussion: A Model of Everyday Political Arguments", *Journal of Politics* 68:272-283 (May 2006).

On the contrary, as Marcus et al. argue, political judgments result from not only contemporary influences or information available, but also from pre-established convictions.⁵³ Predispositions and standing decisions set a baseline for subsequent decision-making, and understandably impact decision outcomes. Those biased in favour of freedom may be more likely to protect civil liberties than those who are concerned about safety for example. In fact, part of the benefit of the creation of a deliberative body is found in the diversity of values which it is able to reflect. Having been randomly selected, (outside bias caused through regional attachment and an usually high degree of commitment), this Assembly should be considered to be fairly representative of the diversity and make up of the distribution of values found in the larger public. And, as groups are invariably affected by inputs, and are influenced by previous knowledge, value predispositions, standing decisions; they should also be considered to be thinking, reasoning bodies. Therefore, an investigation into the Assembly's values and ability to reason and respect differing values is germane in evaluating representative and process legitimacy, and integral in understanding how they arrived at their recommendation.

Interviewing Ontario Assembly members

During the deliberation portion of the Ontario process, 15 young members of the Assembly were interviewed for approximately an hour.⁵⁴ Close-ended quantitative questions were asked, as well as ten open-ended qualitative questions (see Appendix A for full quantitative and qualitative interview schedule). These questions were aimed at gauging respondent's feelings about government, the Assembly process in general; member's comfort levels in expressing their opinions during deliberation, and satisfaction as a result of participation.⁵⁵ When questioned regarding how they felt about being selected to take part in the Assembly process, youth members overwhelmingly reported that, after initial confusion and skepticism, they were excited and interested, with many understandably conveying a sense of feeling lucky to be chosen for such an important task.⁵⁶ "At first I was ambiguous. But, when I thought about being part of a historical process, I was excited."⁵⁷ The group was self-described

53. George E. Marcus, John, L. Sullivan, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, and, Sandra L. Wood, *With Malice Toward Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgments* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). See chapter 1.

54. Less than 35 years old. In total there were 27 members who qualified. All qualifying members were given an invitation to participate which was followed up by email.

55. The initial intent of this survey was to better understand how participation in such a process might affect attitudes toward government, and also to gain an understanding of motivations of those who are committed and engaged, in order that we may be better able to address the decline in youth participation. Youth were therefore the focus of this investigation, and those over the age of 35 were not surveyed. As a result we cannot generalize about value preferences beyond youth, as it is unclear if youth members differed from those over 35 with respect to standing decisions or value pre-dispositions. The interviews however do provide valuable insights into the process of deliberation of Assembly members.

56. Questions referenced were, "Can you tell me how you felt – what was your initial reaction when the Citizens' Assembly contacted you?" And, "What made you decide to participate? Did anyone influence your decision?"

57. Anonymous quote from Assembly member interview.

as “super keeners” as a result of having had this opportunity. Several compared the experience to winning a lottery of sorts. Some members also recognized that their feelings about participating were unique or attributable to a stronger than normal sense of obligation, noting that their friends were not at all as enthusiastic about the prospect of participation in such a task. In fact many reported that their friends discouraged them from participating, and one member was even “spurred on” by her friends’ resistance. Undoubtedly, the act of being selected, coupled with the desire to be chosen sets at least some members of this group apart from their peers, and could have had an impact on their decision-making. But, importantly this motivation was not attached to the prospect of reforming the electoral system. No references were made to interest in changing the way Ontario vote as motivation to participate. In fact, few knew anything about alternative electoral systems when the process began. Instead this group was largely motivated by a sense of civic duty and the opportunity to be part of a new form of participation. As described by one Assembly member, “Civic obligation motivated me, as I thought; this can only work if average people would be willing to commit. I went through a process of moral evaluation.”⁵⁸ This greater than average commitment to the public good is much more evident when we turn to review Assembly member responses to the question about how they felt about government.

When asked the question, “Have you changed the way you look at government or the media as a result of your participation?”, Assembly members noted a decided improvement in their opinion of government and Members of Parliament. Yet they reported a decline in their opinion of the news media, an observation that will become more evident in our discussion of the media coverage of the Assembly and the referendum. Participants acknowledged that this change was in part a result of new information regarding the responsibility and role of Members of Parliament which they acquired during the education process, and as a result of having had an opportunity to meet former Members of Provincial Parliament. Assembly members interviewed mentioned that they had a much better idea of what an MPP does, how the system works, and what representation means -- but also, how difficult coming together and understanding the issues are for politicians. Similarly some also expressed a sense of gratitude toward government for making this process possible, crediting the government with bravery and openness which could be to their own detriment, as the Assembly would wield a great deal of power and their recommendation could ultimately effect the job security of MPPs.⁵⁹ Finally, in the initial stages, several of those interviewed shared feelings of identification with MPPs, and expressed a greater sense of respect toward politicians in general resulting from, ‘being in their shoes’ during the deliberation process. Critically, these positive feelings did not transfer to political structures, as we witnessed with perceptions of the media. Many Assembly members noted that the actors within politics seemed to be doing the best that they could, but the structures and system of politics itself were to blame for negative outcomes. This sentiment was captured thorough the following comments from members, “Systematic problems cause politics

58. *Ibid.*

59. Notably this sense of gratitude disappeared by the final stage in the interview process, and was replaced by open hostility toward the Liberal government in particular. Some members charged the government with abandoning the process during the campaign, and held them responsible for the poor referendum result. In the end, the Liberal government was viewed as poorly as the press, as many Assembly members felt a sense of betrayal.

to happen the way that it does. To me, if you can change the Legislature, making it more effective, you can make government more effective.”⁶⁰ Or similarly, “I have greater respect for government and politicians, but I remain cynical about politics. The only way to make things better is by changing them from the inside – change the system and change the psychology.”⁶¹ Notably, not everyone reported a change in their opinion of government, but among those who did not, only one could be considered hostile, or overtly negative, referring to the political class as “liars and cheats”. Overall, the members seemed to paint a very rosy picture with respect to their view of Members of Provincial Parliament that is not generally reflected by the populace. But how distorted is this picture?

Comparing the views

Figure 1: Voter Turnout

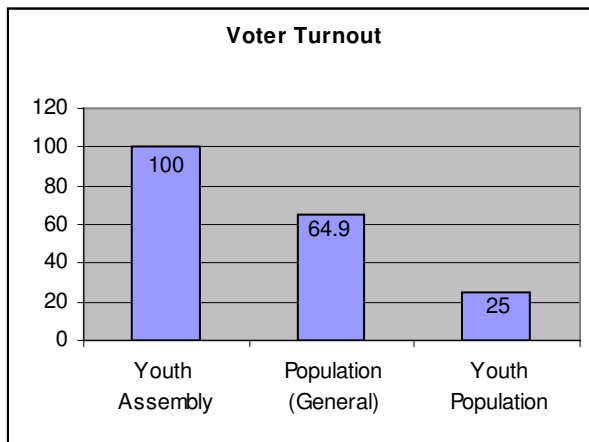
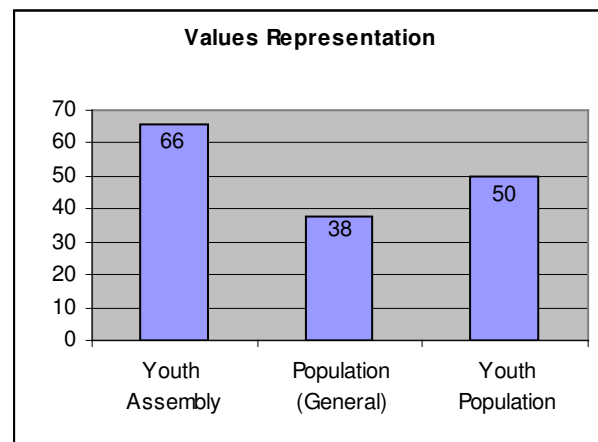


Figure 2: Values Representation



60. Anonymous quote from Assembly member interview.

61. *Ibid.*

Figure 3: Government Responsibility

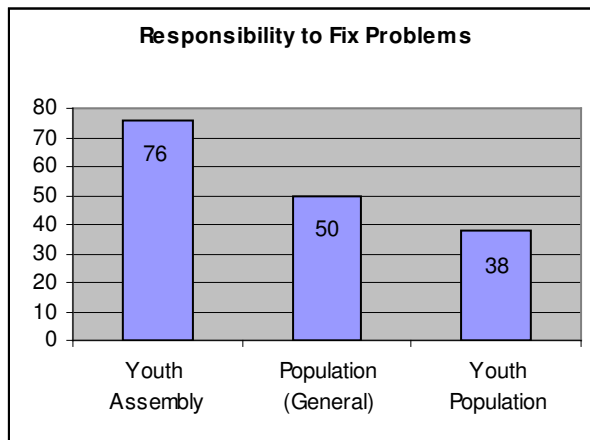
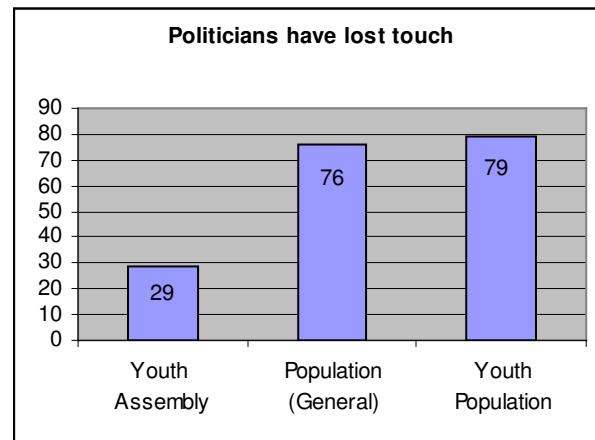


Figure 4: Politicians Have Lost Touch



Fireweed Democracy Project. Data collected in 2006 by André Turcotte and Alan Gregg. Data courtesy of Rick Anderson⁶²

When comparing the findings from this group to the broader public opinion we see distinct and almost startling differences, and these differences are magnified when we directly contrast these results with opinions from those under 35. Where the Assembly group reports 100% turnout in elections, the electoral turnout in the 2006 federal election was 64.9%, and youth voter turnout is estimated to be hovering around the 25% to 30% mark.⁶³ Similarly, as two thirds of youth Assembly members see their values represented by politicians, only 38% of the aggregate population share this feeling, and roughly 50% of youth.⁶⁴ Additionally, when asked who was responsible to fix problems, 76% of Assembly members supported the idea that it was their responsibility, but populist support was much more tempered in the aggregate populace with support of only 50% feeling a sense of ownership, and this figure was reduced again in youth with a mere 38% believing that they had a responsibility to fix problems.⁶⁵ Lastly, and perhaps most dramatic; only 29% of those Assembly members interviewed believed that politicians have lost touch, yet 76% of the population do, and this number increases to the 79% mark for the youth cohort.⁶⁶ The difference is dramatic. On virtually all comparable measures relating to the perceptions of members of parliament, this group of young people do not reflect popularly held opinions, and demonstrate an out of proportion allegiance to the political class that is not aggregately reflected in the general population or found within the youth population more generally. But why should this sense of loyalty in particular be of concern?

62. Fireweed Barometer <www.fireweeddemocracyproject.ca>

63. See Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, "Confronting the Problem of Declining Turnout Among Youth", *Electoral Insight* 5: 3-8 (July 2003).

64 Fireweed Democracy Project at <www.fireweeddemocracyproject.ca>

65. *Ibid.*

66. Canadian Election Study 2006, <<http://www.ces-ec.umontreal.ca/ces.html>>

This positive disposition towards the political class may not seem to be particularly important until we recall that part of the task put in the hands of these young people includes the decision over MPP's political futures. Within the purview of electoral rule making, members decide how many seats will be up for grabs at election time, and if those seats remain as riding seats, or will be divided up regionally or provincially. Part of the task of this Assembly included determining the size of the legislature itself, and the number of constituency seats within it. As mentioned previously all of these decisions impact the fate of politicians within the government and outside. Some forms of electoral change would favour the status quo while alternatives might strengthen the role of MPP and party⁶⁷ or weaken it.⁶⁸ When making changes to the electoral system, any one value (such as local representation, or the size of the legislature), impacts another value (such as demographic or geographic representation). Electoral reform is a zero sum game. With respect to Mixed Member Proportional electoral systems, (which the Assembly appeared to favour), holding on to constituency seats affects fairness, or the ability to reflect proportionality or vote share if the legislature is not increased dramatically. There are trade-offs. Likewise, the selection of MMP itself can be argued as a choice which protects Member's seats, while Single Transferable Vote systems might not. Consequently, if opinions held by Members toward government are out of line with the public, this matters. We do not know if this group held these opinions prior to engaging in the process, or alternatively, as a consequence of learning. Differences which we observed could be in part a the result of an educative effect of participation, which any citizen would gain through intense engagement and the acquisition of greater knowledge. We see this demonstrated by member's comments in response to the question, "Have you changed the way you look at government or the media as a result of your participation?"

"A lot more aware of what government does. Less cynical. I think they do a good job. May not like the system, or see it as legitimate. Media takes a story and presents it any way that they want."

"I have changed with respect to government – this process is groundbreaking and a leap of faith. We aren't pros, we aren't rich. This is really brave and exciting and demonstrates an openness from them to hear. The media is sad – it just goes with what's sexy. Doing a disservice to the public at large."

"Never liked the media. That has not changed. With respect to government, as I have a much better idea of what an MPP does, I understand what representation means. Systematic problems cause politics to happen the way it does."

67. Single Transferable Vote systems strengthen the role of the local member. However they also induce intraparty competition. Closed lists, which can be found in both Proportional and Mixed Member Proportional systems, tend to enhance party strength.

68. Intraparty competition found in STV systems may tend to weaken political parties. For more on electoral systems and their implications see, David M. Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, (NY, Palgrave, 2001). and Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count*, (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

It is understandable that, as a result of being part of the Assembly, a participant's views might change. However, as these interviews took place during the deliberation phase, and were not conducted prior to the beginning of the Assembly, we cannot know for certain. The magnitude of difference does underline a difference in perception. Perhaps future Assemblies could be polled before engagement with the process to better understand the process of attitude formation and change more clearly, or at the very least we must recognize that the positive educative effect of participation may impact the decision making process.

Identity and the reflection of diversity

Nevertheless, before we criticize this deliberative exercise for being less than perfectly reflective of the larger public, there are two very important areas that should be considered as both figuratively and literally adding value to representation. With respect to the representation of viewpoints and reflection of diversity, the members reported an eclectic range of views which lends credence to the conception of the normative ideal of the citizen jury or mini public, and perhaps captures yet another shortfall of partisan politics or policy making.⁶⁹ Citizen juries allow for a broad range of voices to be expressed respectfully, and for this reason are considered to be more representative than many elected bodies. Although all of the youth members share in common their age, and they all vote, that is perhaps where the similarity in the youth cohort ends.⁷⁰ When answering the question regarding who they think they represent or identify with, some identify with their age cohort, while others identify with their gender, demographic groups, or geographic location.⁷¹ Some members interviewed appeared to be influenced by their professional, educational or personal backgrounds, yet others saw themselves as more generally representing Ontario as a whole, while others were influenced by the geographic region which they felt needed their voice. Moreover, many identified with more than one group at a time. For example, they do not see themselves as representing only geographic concerns, women's issues, minority rights, or championing the youth cause; but rather see themselves as representing several identities at once.

"I am not representing the average. The idea of average is silly, but when you sample the aggregate population, you will achieve an 'average' sample. I represent my views – but I am comprised of multiple identities, all of which represent my decision-making"

"I reflect my generation, but mostly I see myself as representing women's interests."

"Attending many consultation meetings has made me acutely aware of the concerns of the average person in Ontario. I do not see myself as an Assembly member, or a

69. See Matthew Mendelsohn, "Public Brokerage: Constitutional Reform and the Accommodation of Mass Publics", *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33: 245-272 (June 2000). and Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory", *American Review of Political Science* 6: 307-326 (2003).

70. Mary Pat MacKinnon, "Youth/ Ballot Box Disconnect" at Canadian Policy Research Networks, <<http://www.cprn.com/doc.cfm?doc=1645&l=en>>

71. The question read "Do you see yourself as representing viewpoints of others or, do you feel you are speaking for a specific group of people in your role as an Assembly member? If so, which one?"

woman, or a young person – but the average Ontarian.”

“I speak for the Francophone community and myself.”

“I think about gender, demographic and geographic concerns, maintain views of others, but also my own.”

Perhaps we should expect this degree of sophistication when describing identity and representation, as it was a focus of discussion during the education phase. This depth of understanding also could be a response to criticism of the previous Citizen Assembly in British Columbia, where it was unclear who members understood they were representing.⁷² In Ontario they were encouraged to see themselves representing a range of differing identities, which is important for the process of deliberation. As one interviewee noted:

“...the first weekend at the Assembly, we talked about representation and what that meant to us personally. It was interesting to learn that all members perceived their role as representatives in slightly different ways... I saw myself as the representative of the _____ provincial riding. I was selected for the Assembly as the sole person from this riding so it was important to me to try and represent the community I grew up in as best I could. I did this by making connections with interested parties in my riding; contacting my local paper and asking them to write an article about the Citizens’ Assembly; and by participating in public events in my riding to explain our recommendation in the months before the referendum....second to representing my riding, I felt that it was important to do my best to represent young women. I felt a responsibility to represent younger Ontarians ...”

A similar pattern emerges when we review value reflections. Just as we observed with the question, “who are you representing?”, individuals differed with respect to positions on value priorities. There were a variety of responses (including, greater accountability, voter choice, fairness, proportionality, simplicity, legitimacy, demographic representation for women, and demographic representation for minorities, geographic representation).

Unlike the issue of representation and identity, where many identities can be accommodated within by one individual, there is an inherent tension between group members’ priorities, as these values often clash or conflict with one another. When answering the question, “what value is most important to you?” some looked for greater accountability, and others looked for proportionality, demographic representation, or voter choice. Assembly members were far from consensus on these matters, as demonstrated by a sample of comments below.

“The most paramount thing for me is being able to vote for the person that I like, opposed to what I can live with. I now vote strategically because I do not have any other option. Voter choice is what I care about the most. The broader or more representative, geography, women, the greater likelihood of more interesting solutions, and problems not being viewed through a narrow economic lens.”

72. R.S. Ratner, “The BC Citizens’ Assembly: The Public Hearings and Deliberation Stage”, *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 31 (Spring 2005).

“... the values of proportionality and demographics are generally held to. But I am concerned about the amount of ‘meaningful’ discussion, or consideration given to minority views in favour of the average.”

“...accountability is important to me. In my experience governments must be held accountable. Also, it needs to be simple so everyone can participate. Voting is a privilege.”

“Number of votes must equal the number of seats, and the government must be able to be held accountable – this needs to change.”

As mentioned previously, electoral engineering is a zero sum game – not all priorities can be equally served. Greater proportionality and voter choice can be achieved through forms of PR, but the choice of PR does not incorporate local representation as well as does the present first past the post system. There are trade-offs. Additionally, members reported that these values did not change throughout the process. If they ranked proportionality as most important at the beginning, it remained important to them throughout. However, they also recognized that being part of a group would have to involve compromise. Many acknowledged that this was the first opportunity for them to debate and consider alternative views, and as a result they entertained other value priorities along with those which they initially felt were important. Similarly, although some recognized that their own personal priority was perhaps not the group’s priority, (and that they held a minority opinion) they felt comfortable in the knowledge that they were able to articulate their concerns, and that their values were given appropriate consideration. Most of the time members willingly compromised their positions to accommodate those held by others, and witnessed others change their opinions and compromise as well.

Understanding deliberation

Not everyone was as at ease in all situations, or comfortable expressing their opinion (particularly in plenary); many noted that although they did not speak up, their opinion had been expressed. Understandably, during this debate some members were more vocal than others. This evened itself out in the smaller group discussions where many were more comfortable and participated more actively in the dialogue. Internet forums were also set up to keep discussion going, attracting many of the younger cohort who were perhaps more dominant in this venue. This response to the questions, “Did you feel comfortable forwarding your opinions and discuss ideas? Did you see anyone change their mind? Did you change your mind?”, many noted that they were quite comfortable and several changed their mind, where others did not.

“Everybody had some kind of views. Are some arguments dominant? Yes, I’ve changed my mind, trying to combine what I like with others. The group is responsive.”

“I have said more than my share. Seemed to be the people who have a position, *and can articulate it*, that have done the most talking. Some have read through the material and come prepared to discuss their observations. Others learn from discussion – they are listeners. Neither position is better than the other. I read through the IDEA handbook that was given out during week one, and I have not changed my mind. I listen and go back and forth, and change funky things, but nothing big. My values stay the same.”

“I definitely feel more comfortable – *more* comfortable in the small group. I used the forum on a regular basis. I like to read and get more background. Keep it in mind for discussion. I saw a lot of people change their mind. It’s happened to me.”

“Having cameras on you is more intimidating, but in small group I am comfortable. It is more intimate. We are reaching the heckle stage in plenary, as some people dominate, and the group is growing weary of them. Surprisingly a lot of people have changed their minds – perhaps too much mind changing is going on? On the other side, some people say, “it has to be this way, or I won’t vote”. The underrepresented want more representation – I can sympathize, but I do not agree and have not been persuaded. Majority rules. I have not changed my mind.”

“...yes, learning more, and hearing more, I tried to collaborate, and my values shifted as I listened, and I compromised to accommodate others as I wanted my views to be valued as well.”

“I went with preset values, my values did not change, but no system in mind. My view of the system changed.”

Overall the group understood and exemplified the spirit of respect, and sought common ground in place of conflict. These are essential elements of a deliberative process, but they also explain how outcome legitimacy can be arrived at, even though differing views are deeply held. Or, simply put, it explains why process legitimacy is important in arriving at outcome legitimacy, and the value of having many points of view engaged in discussion.

This was not easy, but often difficult, or even quite painful for the participants. At times discussion was fractious, and closer to the end of deliberation there was an unmistakable ‘high stakes’ tension or seriousness within the group. At times, once intelligent debate regressed into seemingly endless discussion about the margins.⁷³ There were undoubtedly hurt feelings. In interviews conducted after deliberation: some members expressed a measure of frustration with the inability to move the debate forward, and others were frustrated by the feeling of not being able to have more influence on the outcome, and a sense of being sidelined or even silenced in the final days of deliberation.

“...felt comfortable, but it got pretty tough because things were going one way in the end, and it didn’t matter what was said – it wouldn’t make a difference. They committed to revisiting issues, if need be, but we ran out of time. I was angry and frustrated, and also concerned with the level of respect afforded to some in the end.”

For the most part the group relied on the almost familial bonds formed throughout the process and the leadership of both George Thompson and Jonathan Rose to resolve this friction. And even though arriving at consensus was not easy, those on both sides of the discussion expressed support for the outcome. Even those who felt somehow marginalized,

73. There was considerable discussion and several votes on the subject of overhangs that often became circular. This issue was particularly important to members who valued greater representation of minority parties and fairness in the representative process.

seemed to understand and accept that, although they had failed to persuade the group, in the end it was important to concede for the good of the process and group, as indicated in this comment.

“Yes, I changed my mind, as my choice was removed from the table. Part of the change was education, and the understanding that we needed to move along – to make a decision. No system is perfect, but this one represents our ideals most accurately.”

This does not entirely negate the previously discussed representative legitimacy problem, but it does demonstrate the benefits of a deliberative process, and the ability of deliberative forums to approach theoretical ideals. Furthermore, it demonstrates the role and contribution of integrating values in the discussion. The political and group reasoning process is complex and highlights the limitations of our present parliamentary system, hence explaining in part why an elected legislative body may not be able to articulate and aggregate the diversity of public opinion as effectively. Rarely do we see a legislature engage in thoughtful, respectful debate that is inclusive and encouraging to opinions that might challenge partisan positions. The process is valuable, both normatively and instrumentally - and it is possible, albeit imperfect. Deliberative democracy in its ideal state encourages well informed, reasoned decision-making by capturing and representing a broad range of opinions respectfully, which may not always be found in parliamentary or electoral settings.⁷⁴ Therefore, this deliberation exercise has much to contribute to democratic reform, if for nothing else but to provide an example for our political leadership to follow, and it also has something to offer to the citizenry at large.

Public opinion on electoral reform

As with Assembly members, public opinion for the most part was open to the idea of electoral reform, but unlike the Assembly the public was not strongly supportive or in any way looking to ‘make history’. Questions on the subject that have been routinely included in past surveys generally tend to show a public that is aware of, and critical of, problems in the electoral system, and somewhat positive toward the principle of greater proportionality, although not necessarily favouring any specific proposal for reform. The public thinks about issues involving elections mainly at election time, but not on any continuing basis. Hence, voters may often be frustrated at the choices presented to them in a given election, but when the election is over there is little lingering desire to engage in a continuing debate on electoral reform. In New Zealand, there was genuine public anger at the electoral system, and the unrepresentative governments that it tended to produce. But in Canada, and particularly in Ontario, we do not find an underlying climate of opinion that would necessarily facilitate the passage of a reform proposal. Nevertheless, one can also say that opinion was not entirely unreceptive.

74. Lawrence LeDuc, “Referendums and Deliberative Democracy”, paper presented at the International Political Science Association World Congress, Fukuoka, Japan, July 9-13, 2006.

Table 1. Attitudes toward electoral reform in three provinces*

a) How satisfied are you with the way the electoral system works in Canada – very satisfied, fairly satisfied, moderately dissatisfied, very dissatisfied?

	VS	FS	MD	VD
Ontario	14.6%	60.4%	21.1%	3.9%
BC	6.5%	53.3%	32.6%	7.7%
PEI	9.4%	66.0%	20.8%	3.8%
All Canada	10.8%	60.1%	23.9%	5.3%

b) Can you tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: *In an election, a party that gets ten percent of the vote should get ten percent of the seats.*

	SA	A	D	SD	DK/NA
Ontario	11.3%	33.0%	28.7%	8.4%	18.6%
BC	8.7%	38.3%	22.0%	6.8%	24.2%
PEI	11.3%	28.3%	35.8%	9.4%	15.1%
All Canada	10.1%	34.6%	28.2%	7.9%	19.2%

c) Can you tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: *Our democracy works better when there are more political parties.*

	SA	A	D	SD	DK/NA
Ontario	5.9%	31.4%	38.5%	9.8%	14.5%
BC	5.7%	32.6%	34.8%	7.2%	19.7%
PEI	7.5%	32.1%	43.4%	9.4%	7.5%
All Canada	5.9%	31.7%	37.8%	9.0%	15.7%

*2004 CES, Mail back wave. N (All Canada) = 1674.

Table 1 displays responses to three questions that were included in the 2004 Canadian Election Study. The majority of respondents across the country expressed “satisfaction” with the electoral system, while about a quarter expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction. The percentage expressing satisfaction was slightly higher in Ontario, and slightly lower in British Columbia. However, when asked to state opinions about proportionality as a general principle, there is more agreement than disagreement (table 1b). Differences among the provinces in this regard are small, and there are of course also high levels of uncertainty as represented by the substantial proportion of “don’t know” responses. The public is somewhat more divided in its responses to a question asking if democracy would “work better” if there were more political parties (table 1c), but there are again relatively high levels of uncertainty about such an idea.

This is an area in which public opinion is, understandably, relatively unformed, and the underlying attitudes suggest a “show me” mentality among much of the mass public.

Table 2. Public Awareness of the Citizens’ Assembly and Referendum, April 2007

a) *As you may have heard, the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, established by the Ontario government, has recommended a new proportional representation voting system for elections in Ontario called Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). How much have you seen, read, or heard about this?*

(%)	<u>Toronto area</u>	<u>All Ontario</u>
A lot	8.2	4.5
Some	21.3	14.6
Little or nothing	70.6	80.7

b) There will be a referendum question with the Ontario provincial election this fall where voters will be asked if we should change the way we elect our politicians. Please tell me if you would vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the following referendum question that will be on the ballot: *Should Ontario adopt the Mixed Member Proportional electoral system as recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform?*⁷⁵

(%)	<u>Toronto area</u>	<u>All Ontario</u>
yes, definitely	26.8	7.0
yes, maybe	21.6	24.6
no, maybe	10.9	14.0
no, definitely	8.4	10.2
DK, undecided, etc.	31.1	33.4

StratCom Research, April 21-27, 2007. N=611. Poll commissioned by Fair Vote Canada. By permission.

Such a climate of opinion might have been positive for a public debate on electoral reform had such a debate actually taken place. But the debate that did ensue, taking place mainly in the print media and among elites, occurred largely in a vacuum insofar as much of the public was concerned. The small amount of coverage that the Citizens’ Assembly received over

75. Note: The actual wording of the referendum question was not known at the time of this survey.

the eight months of its deliberations meant that the public was largely unaware of its existence, or that a debate on electoral reform was taking place. A poll commissioned immediately following the conclusion of the Assembly and the public release of its recommendation found that four out of five of those surveyed across the province had heard “little or nothing” about the Assembly and its recommendation. Awareness was only slightly higher in the Toronto area than in the province as a whole.

Table 3. Arguments in support of MMP

YES ARGUMENTS, "VERY CONVINCING"	
The proposed new system gives each voter more choice and makes the system fairer because everyone gets two votes	39.9
In our current system, votes are wasted because many people cast votes that don't elect anyone.	39.5
The current system stifles new ideas and new parties . We should have a voting system like MMP that gives new ideas and new parties a fair chance.	37.9
Canada is one of the few major Western countries still using our current system. It's time we modernize our system .	36.8
Election results under the current system are not fair . The winning party will often get minority of the votes, but win a majority of the seats.	32.7
Proportional representation will cause more coalitions or minority governments to form and that forces parties to work together to find common interests.	32.3
The people who don't like the proposed new system are the old Ontario political establishment . These elites want to preserve the system that keeps putting them back in power.	32.3
Proportional representation helps under-represented groups such as women get elected and that is good reason to have MMP.	26.7
The current political system in Ontario isn't working. This new system might not be perfect, but it's time for a change .	26.3
The new system was created by a group of 103 average citizens who were randomly selected for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. Since they no vested interest, and intensively studied this for seven months, we can trust what they recommend.	19.2

StratCom Research, April 21-27, 2007. N=611. Poll commissioned by Fair Vote Canada. By permission.

Table 4. Arguments in opposition to the MMP proposal

NO ARGUMENTS, "VERY CONVINCING"	%
Not enough information about MMP. It is too important a change to make to our voting system without knowing more about it.	42.2
The new system is going to increase the number of politicians and cost us more. We do not need more politicians or added costs.	41.6
The new system would give too much influence to "party bosses" because they would determine who gets on their parties' list.	31.4
List members would not be elected to represent a specific riding, and therefore would not be accountable to voters.	24.5
The new MMP system would produce more minority or coalition governments , and would cause more frequent elections.	23.2
With MMP we would end up with a lot of small, special-interest fringe parties in the Legislature.	19.7
The new system seems too confusing . We should stick with something simpler like what we have now.	17.3
The existing system is not perfect but it works , and there is no need to experiment with the way that we elect our provincial politicians.	16.1
This new voting system was proposed by a Citizens Assembly of average Ontario voters who are not experts . I do not believe we should make important decisions in this way.	15.6

StratCom Research, April 21-27, 2007. N=611. Poll commissioned by Fair Vote Canada. By permission.

In spite of this relatively low level of awareness, the same poll also found that a plurality of respondents might have voted “yes” to a referendum question on reform, based on their understanding of the issue at that time (table 2b). But at least a third of the respondents at that early stage had not yet formed an opinion. And even many of those that had some view on the subject might have been persuaded by a vigorous campaign. The poll data show that, when presented with coherent arguments in support of either the YES or NO side, opinion was quite malleable. Presented with arguments that might be used in support of, or in opposition to, the proposed reform, many respondents found the arguments “convincing”. Many of the arguments that were later put forward by the YES side resonated with the public, particularly the desirability of a second vote, the wasted votes and unfairness of FPTP, recognition of new parties such as the Greens, and the need to modernize political institutions and processes (table 3). Even one of the main arguments that would be used extensively in the campaign by MMP’s opponents - the probability of minority or coalition governments – had, for some respondents a positive connotation, expressed as the desirability to put an end to adversarial politics and force parties and politicians to “work together”. The most persuasive argument of the NO side (table 4), in the view of the poll respondents, was the “lack of sufficient information”, a condition that of course might have been overcome by a more vigorous public information campaign. But, as would later become clear, the public’s frustration at a lack of information would continue to bedevil proponents of MMP right through voting day. It was in the end, for many, a sufficient reason to vote against the proposal.

The public discourse in print

Where public opinion demonstrated a relative openness to debating the issue, the mainstream print media were uniformly opposed to both the Assembly process and the MMP proposal. The *National Post* did not even wait for the campaign to begin before staking out its editorial position, in spite of the fact that one of its own columnists, Andrew Coyne, who had followed the Assembly process closely, was among the few journalists supportive of electoral reform. In its editorial, published on April 17th, only two days after the Assembly had finalized its recommendation, the *Post* painted a horrific picture of the damage that might be inflicted on Ontarians should they lack the good sense to reject such a terrible proposal. Headlined “PR is a Bad Idea”, the *Post* editorial identified PR as the system that “had elected the Nazis in Weimar Germany” and was responsible for Israel’s current political problems.⁷⁶ Under PR, the *Post* continued, political parties would “breed like rabbits”.⁷⁷ Barely acknowledging that what the Citizens’ Assembly had proposed was in fact a mixed system, the *Post* drew all of its examples of the perils that awaited Ontarians from Weimar Germany, Israel and post-war Italy, and referred to the Citizens’ Assembly proposal as the “so-called mixed member proportional system”, contrasting it unfavourably with “tried and true” first past the post.⁷⁸ Electoral reform in Ontario, the *Post* opined, citing the British Columbia experience, might set loose an “interprovincial epidemic” of reform. There was, the editorial concluded, “still time to stop it”.⁷⁹

76. *National Post*, April 17, 2007. p. A16

77. *Ibid*

78. *Ibid*

79. *Ibid*

There was indeed plenty of time to stop it. The coverage in other papers was almost as negative, in part because so many of the regular political columnists opposed the proposed reform at an early stage. Jeffrey Simpson, in a *Globe and Mail* column on May 16th, ridiculed both the proposal and the process that had produced it.⁸⁰ Comparing the debate on electoral reform to esoteric discussions of constitutional amending formulas or Senate reform, Simpson suggested that McGuinty had initiated the Assembly process for “no reason”, and that the Assembly, once commissioned, was bound to recommend “some sort of change” and thus came up with “something called Mixed Member Proportional”.⁸¹ “It is to be hoped”, Simpson maintained, “that Ontarians will say NO”, although he also suggested that “no one may vote” because the subject was so boring.⁸² Simpson also wrote a somewhat more serious and less dismissive, but equally negative, column on the subject that appeared in the *Globe* a few days before the referendum.⁸³

The *Globe and Mail* itself weighed in against the MMP proposal on its editorial page on October 4th. Like other papers, the principal political columnists in the *Globe* had published articles both on the Citizens’ Assembly and on the reform proposal that were largely negative.⁸⁴ But the *Globe* also published op-ed pieces by academics and others supporting MMP, and it did not formally take an editorial position on the referendum until near the end of the campaign.⁸⁵ In a tortured editorial (“Ontario’s Missed Opportunity”), the *Globe* sought to position itself on the side of reform while at the same time urging voters to reject MMP. The editorial criticized nearly all of the specifics of the MMP proposal, indicating that it would have preferred a parallel model to MMP, a 5% threshold rather than 3%, a different method of constructing the party lists, and even a referendum held at some other time.⁸⁶ It also suggested that a reform proposal should have been developed by a “small panel of experts” rather than a citizens’ assembly, which the *Globe* characterized as “populist pandering”.⁸⁷ Remarkably, the editorial concluded that Ontario’s next government should “take a more serious stab” at the issue.⁸⁸

80. Jeffrey Simpson, “Chill the Beer, Pass the Ketchup”, *Globe and Mail*, May 16, 2007, p. A21

81. *Ibid*

82. *Ibid*

83. Jeffrey Simpson, “MMP Wins Representative Test, But Fails on Accountability and Stability”, *Globe and Mail*, October 5, 2007, p. A27

84. See, for example, Murray Campbell, “Proportional Option Would Do Little To Enhance Democracy”, *Globe and Mail*, September 17, 2007, p. A8

85. See, for example, Tom Kent, “And the Future is ... a Two Vote Electoral System”, *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 2007,

86. “Ontario’s Missed Opportunity”, *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 2007, p. A20

87. *Ibid*

88. *Ibid*

The *Toronto Star* staked out its position against the MMP proposal in its editorial of October 9th (“Electoral Reform Fraught With Risk”), having provided consistently negative coverage of the issue throughout much of the campaign.⁸⁹ Under MMP, the *Star* editorial argued, the winning party would have to “cut deals” to stay in power. The editorial then went on to describe in florid detail some of the potential “deals” that the Liberals might make with their opponents or with fringe parties. It urged a vote in the referendum for first past the post, which had “proven its worth since Confederation” and delivered “strong, stable government”.⁹⁰ A week earlier, the *Star*’s principal provincial political columnist, who had written on the issue a number of times both during the Citizens’ Assembly deliberations and over the summer, had worried that MMP might “sneak to victory”, because voters were so poorly informed on the issue.⁹¹ The *Star* received much criticism for the tone of its coverage from supporters of MMP -- enough that it felt compelled to publish a defence of its handling of the issue a few days after the referendum.⁹²

Voters were poorly informed, in part because the media coverage was so haphazard and the public information campaign run by Elections Ontario so constrained. In response to NDP criticism, the Liberal government chose to put a neutral party in charge of informing the public on behalf of the government. Elections Ontario interpreted its information mandate quite narrowly, and did not inform the public of the substance of the proposal or the competing arguments in favour of or against it. Rather, the public information campaign was directed towards informing the public that there would be a referendum on electoral reform and that their vote in it was “important”. During the campaign, if citizens wanted to understand the issues, or learn more beyond what they read in the press, they were advised by Elections Ontario to visit various websites. Additionally, outside Internet access, the Citizens’ Assembly proposal which explained how and why they arrived at the recommendation was made unavailable to the public by the government shortly after the campaign began. This sanctioned recommendation was not shared openly with the electorate when they would have been most likely to seek it out. This is a curious decision coming from the very government which had commissioned the Assembly, and the original printing of its recommendation in the first place. It was almost as if the government distanced itself from the process at its most vulnerable point, leaving it in the hands of a relatively hostile press. Distance during the election campaign may have been understandable as the Liberals were internally divided on the merits of the proposed reform, with some members speaking in support and others against or mute, but the government need not have supported the recommendation to share information. In fact the government made no effort to publicize the deliberation process, or defend and explain its merit while the Assembly was in session. It was announced and largely ignored until it unveiled its recommendation. Little was understood about why the government felt it needed to construct this body in the first place, or why this group of citizens made the recommendation that they did. As a result, the wider public that had to make the final decision in the referendum was almost completely distanced from the

89. “Electoral Reform Fraught With Risk”, *Toronto Star*, October 9, 2007, p. AA6. Another *Star* editorial, published a week earlier, was equally negative with respect to electoral reform. See “Electoral Reform a Backward Step”, *Toronto Star*, September 30, 2007, p. A24

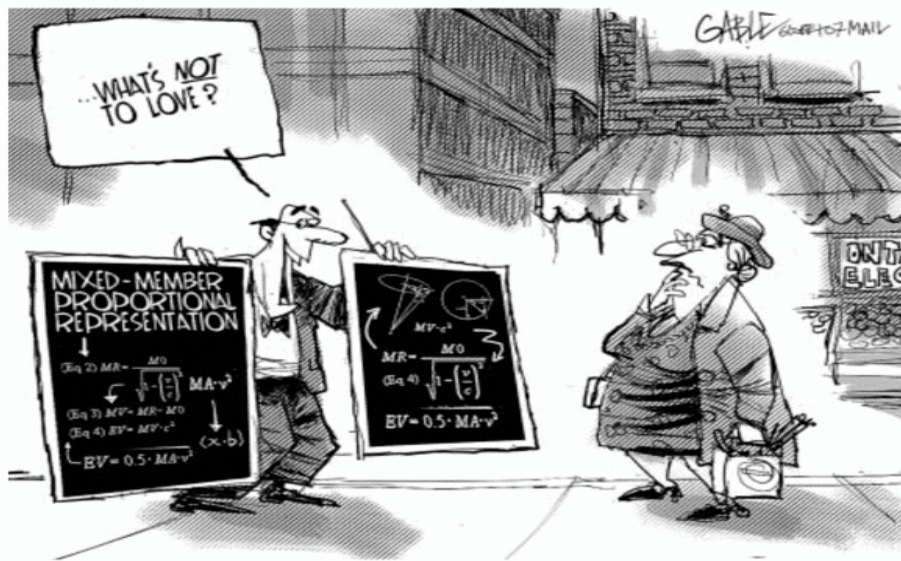
90. *Ibid*

91. Ian Urquhart, “How MMP Could Sneak to Victory”, *Toronto Star*, September 28, 2007, p. A13

92. “Sparkling Needed Debate on MMP”, *Toronto Star*, October 13, 2007, p. AA6

deliberative process that had preceded it.

The low level and poor quality of information on the issue was itself a frequent subject of the print coverage.⁹³ One writer rather perceptively pointed out that the media, having provided little coverage of the Citizens' Assembly or the electoral reform issue until after Labour Day, was now framing the lack of information as a reason to vote NO.⁹⁴ In an op-ed piece published just a week before voting day, Dennis Pilon called for a TV debate on the issue, arguing that the public information campaign and media coverage had been ineffective in adequately informing the public on the issue.⁹⁵ No real debate took place. Instead, the spirit of the print discourse is captured by an editorial cartoon that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on the week-end before the referendum.



Globe and Mail, October 6, 2007.

93. See, for example, Karen Howlett, "Referendum? Now What Referendum Would That Be?", *Globe and Mail*, September 24, 2007, p. A8; or Roy Macgregor, "Ontario Referendum Flying Under the Radar", *Globe and Mail*, October 1, 2007, p. A8

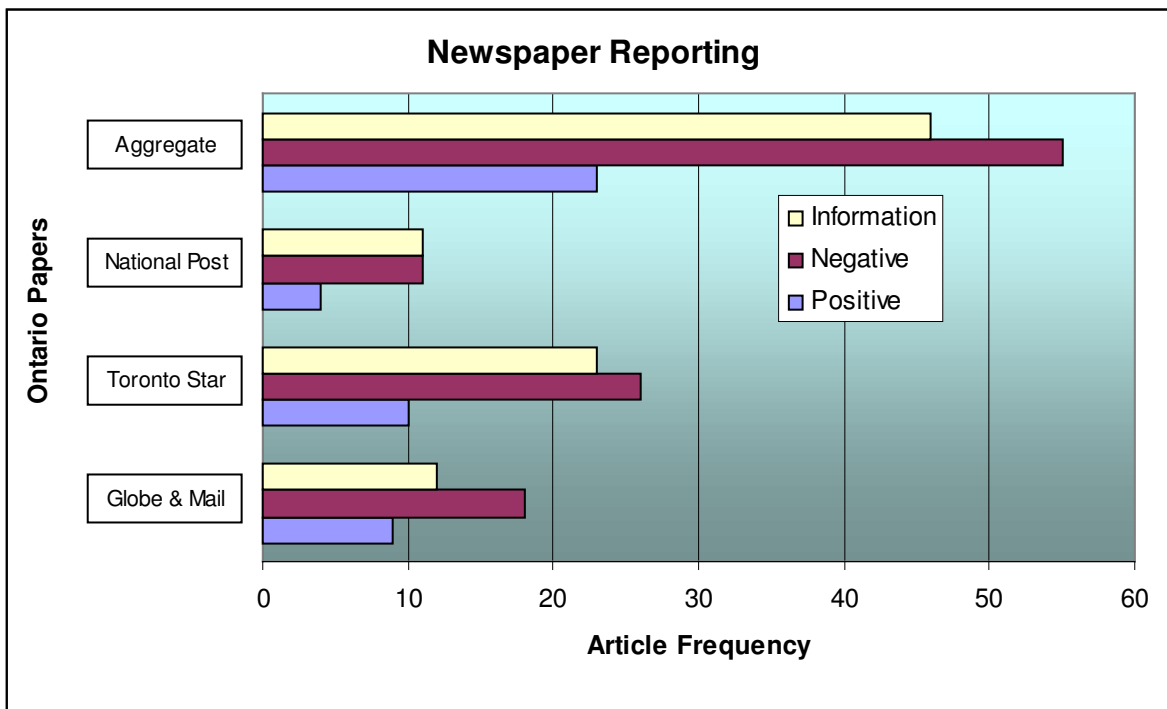
94. Ivor Tossell, "What's That Second Question on the Ballot?", *Globe and Mail*, September 21, 2007, p. R25

95. Dennis Pilon, "Needed: a TV Debate on Ontario's MMP Referendum", *National Post*, October 2, 2007, p. A20

Content analysis of the print media coverage

Ironically, what the government and the newspapers shared in common was the lack of ability and commitment to reach beyond their objections to the proposal and explain the issue to the public. When reviewing the content of articles, we find that all three major papers were uniformly negatively predisposed against MMP, and even the referendum itself. They were also largely dismissive of the Citizens' Assembly. In fact, Ian Urquhart of the *Toronto Star* – one of the few journalists actually covering the Assembly – was highly negative from the beginning in his assessment of the process. There were only three articles exclusively dedicated to explaining or discussing the Assembly process. Of the twenty nine articles which took note of the Assembly along with the electoral reform issue, only six could be considered positive. And, with the exception of Andrew Coyne, all other positive articles were written by activists, or academics. It is little wonder that roughly 80% of Ontarians knew little or nothing about the Assembly, and that those who did were largely negative.⁹⁶ This might be understandable if the Assembly process could in any way be considered an everyday occurrence, or even if concepts of deliberative democracy were commonplace and well understood by the public, and thereby not newsworthy. But this was not the case. In contrast, the convening of a Citizens' Assembly was an event so unique that it drew the interest of both American and European scholars, and yet the Ontario press was curiously indifferent or hostile.

Figure 5: Content analysis of articles in three major newspapers



96. StratCom Research, April 21-27, 2007. N=611. Poll commissioned by Fair Vote Canada. By permission.

As we see in figure 5, when the press did choose to write on the Assembly process, the electoral reform recommendation, or the referendum, its tone was overwhelmingly negative. As previously mentioned, all editorial boards of the major newspapers were aligned in opposition. While only 19% of the articles written could be considered positive, 37% were classified as neutral, or informational, and 45% of the articles were essentially presenting arguments against either the Assembly, the referendum, or the proposed reform.⁹⁷ Notably there were no articles in support of the referendum at all. It was largely dismissed as too complicated, not of interest to the public and unnecessary. Granted the job of the media is in part to be critical. However, theoretically the media are also responsible to present both sides of an issue fairly in order to allow the voting public to decide and debate for it themselves.

The proportion of positive to negative articles was not the only thing that was curiously out of line. When compared to the media coverage in British Columbia, we also find that much less was written altogether about the subject. In total the three major newspapers covering the Ontario referendum ran 124 articles or columns on the Assembly, the electoral reform issue, or the referendum, compared with 180 written by the *Vancouver Sun* alone during the British Columbia referendum process. Although it was not until late in the game that the *Sun's* editorial board weighed in to support the proposed change to STV, it still covered the debate rather extensively.⁹⁸ In the end the *Vancouver Sun* even went so far as to thank the Assembly members for their work, whereas papers in Ontario saw Assembly members as largely invisible or often maligned them, sometimes referring to them improperly as government appointees or pawns.⁹⁹ For example, Ian Urquhart of the *Toronto Star* described the Assembly as being, “comprised mostly of retirees, part-time workers, students, homemakers and computer nerds looking for some excitement in their humdrum lives...”¹⁰⁰ A sample of 28 articles from the *Sun* found 15 in support of change, or 53% of the articles which could be considered positive. In BC the press was more heavily supportive of change, with at least 30 newspapers endorsing the STV proposal.¹⁰¹ Not uncommonly, the rationale advanced for such support was that the Citizens’ Assembly had recommended STV, thereby providing an important degree of legitimacy. In Ontario, almost the exact opposite mentality seemed to predominate.

97. See Appendix C for a full summary of the articles and ratings. Two research assistants were involved in coding the articles. They were given instruction to identify an article as “positive” or “negative” if an argument was being put forward and if the argument could be considered positive, negative, or balanced enough to make it information or inclusive of more than one position. Letters to the editor were excluded from the analysis as they are considered to be in response to the debate, but not framing or leading it. However, it should be noted that there was very active participation in the “Letters” section of all three papers, often in response to the articles or editorials discussed here.

98. “With So Many Flaws in the Current System, It’s Time to Try BC-STV. *The Vancouver Sun*, May 7, 2005. p. C6.

99. Paula Waatainen, “Citizens’ Assembly Members Lauded for their Hard Work”, *Vancouver Sun*, November 3, 2004.

100. Ian Urquhart, “Beware Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform; Giving Back Power to MPPs Would Solve Problems”, *Toronto Star*, Sept. 9, 2006. p. F.5

101. Jeff Lee, “Backers Believe Voters Will Accept STV”, *Vancouver Sun*, April 28, 2005. p. A5.

The *Globe and Mail* however also did not support STV in British Columbia, nor were two of its three major political columnists in favour.¹⁰² The *National Post* did support it, but the *Toronto Star* did not. While press coverage was undeniably more favourable in BC than in Ontario, there was also more of a mixed bag, with the two national papers assuming alternative positions and major movement spokespeople such as Doris Anderson speaking against it. The political climate could explain some of this difference, as the appetite for change was stronger in British Columbia, and British Columbians are considered by many as more populist than Ontarians. Moreover, the Assembly process was truly a revolutionary experiment when first introduced in BC. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder how or if this difference impacted the outcome. Why was there such resistance from the mainstream print media in Ontario in the first place, and why was the dominant view so uniformly negative (bordering on group think)?

Definitive answers to these types of questions are beyond the scope of this paper. Elements of “pack journalism” often exist in modern societies, as journalists not only travel and work together but often focus on a limited range of sources for their information, (usually political actors or bureaucratic insiders).¹⁰³ They also spend time with a limited number colleagues or political actors who over time share similar views. This is of concern, as in these cases social constructions are narrow and journalists have a great deal of authoritative capital within elite circles. Mapping this insight onto “sphere of legitimacy controversy” in which the media decides who and what is to be considered legitimate debate, constitutes a slippery slope for media objectivity.¹⁰⁴ Sphere of legitimacy concerns warn that media report positively on issues which they regard as having or mirroring consensus, and negatively for issues which fall outside popular range, or which they feel should be placed in the “sphere of deviance”.¹⁰⁵ Where are they getting the signals for consensus or deviance? How do they decide who is worthy of consideration and who is left out of the sphere of legitimacy? Moreover, what are these unintentional frames and how do they affect the popular discourse? In interviewing opinion leaders on both sides of this issue in Ontario we are able to shed some light on what made this view dominant, and why it differed both from the views of Assembly members and wider public opinion.

102. Jeffrey Simpson and Murray Campbell were opposed, and John Ibbitson was in favour of both the Assembly process and experimenting with electoral change.

103. Michael Schudson, “The News Media as Political Institutions”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 255 (2002.)

104. *Ibid*, p. 262.

105. *Ibid*, p. 263.

Talking to opinion leaders

During the summer preceding the election campaign, eight interviews of opinion leaders yielded some key insights.¹⁰⁶ These interviews were aimed at understanding how opinions of elite actors or spokespeople which in some way shaped the public dialogue differed from those of the Assembly members. The interview schedules therefore were almost identical to those used previously - probing attitudes towards the Assembly process, Assembly members capacity, values, and learning.¹⁰⁷ They may have been asked almost identical questions, but they did not have identical responses. There was a clear divide between those who were in favour of the Assembly process whose answers mirrored those of Assembly members, and those opposed, who gave quite different responses. As expected, those opposed to the Assembly process were not in support of the Assembly's recommendation. Whereas reformers were cautiously optimistic, while skeptical at the same time, voicing some concern, yet conceding or deferring to the Assembly proposal. Similarly, with one exception, elites that attended the Assembly proceedings tended to be both in favour of the Assembly and the electoral reform proposal that it put forward. Activists were there to bear witness, and academics were there in order to satisfy some measure of intellectual curiosity. Both groups came away with favourable (if not changed) views about the deliberative capacity of the Assembly process. However, those who did not view the Assembly as legitimate for various reasons, were also largely pre-disposed against change of *any* kind. This is demonstrated by the response, "I can see that in BC they had a proportionality problem, but I don't agree it warrants change. This is not a concern of the guy on the street. The one exception would be Harris... He had a radical agenda...Moving away from representative democracy will have unintended consequences."¹⁰⁸

All of the opinion leaders surveyed seem to have an awareness of elements of self selection within the Assembly, and of the Assembly members' opportunity to 'make history' by being part of this process. Several voiced such concerns because they felt that this committed the group to recommending change of some kind. Additionally, all of those interviewed (including those in favour), expressed some degree of criticism of the process.¹⁰⁹ And yet, all of those interviewed – even those who did not view deliberative democracy as legitimate – felt that by and large the process was equitable and contained adequate checks and balances to ensure "fairness". But, as we observed earlier, there was little consensus on the subject of deliberative democracy itself. On that subject there was a surprising lack of internal consistency or depth of

106. Opinion leaders are defined in this study to include all those who have written or spoken publicly, taking a position either for or against the Assembly process and or the Assembly recommendation. This group includes pundits from all three major newspapers, along with activists, academics and political party members. Attempts were made to include all political parties and all parties were contacted to participate, but only one party representative agreed to participate.

107. See Appendix B for a complete list of questions asked. As several of the opinion leaders refused to answer quantitative questions, that portion of the questionnaire was eliminated for these respondents.

108. Anonymous opinion leader interview.

109. These concerns range from the role of the Chair and Academic Director to information sources and materials used, or the government's handling of public relations etc.

understanding.¹¹⁰ This was evident by comparisons to citizen input forums, and little concern over lack of accountability or the problems of arriving at consensus which are often seen as basic starting points for such discussions. Instead, opinion leaders seemed to demonstrate a self-serving thin critique as illustrated by responses such as, “It’s just a bad idea...”, “...it undermines the Legislature...”, or , “...I don’t wallow in detail...”. Above all, with a few exceptions, neither pro or con individuals seemed to grasp what the process was designed to address. Those opinion leaders in favour of electoral change seemed happy as the process generated support for a change that they valued, but they were not too concerned with the process or with deliberative theory or popular sovereignty otherwise. Whereas opinion leaders who rejected the Assembly process outright viewed it as a threat to the legitimacy of parliament since it placed the legitimate discourse outside of the Legislature and involved “ordinary citizens” who were, in their view, ill-equipped to navigate such complex political matters.

When asked the question, “Do you have confidence in this group’s ability to reason?”, the answers again were quite simple, with a few exceptions. Those opposed seemed to qualify the Assembly’s capacity to reason with a correspondence to shared values, with comments such as, “Not sure about their ability to reason. Some members shared my view of electoral reform.”¹¹¹ Or similarly, “Citizens’ Assembly is filled with well-meaning amateurs. They study reform without knowing or being involved with the process. They are a cure looking for a disease. It is dangerous. This will produce back-room dealing that I can only presume that they are against. The fringe is concerned with politics and not policy.”¹¹² More deeply, they believed that Assembly members were capable of reasoning, but lacked the requisite knowledge or expert opinion about Parliament and the machinations of politics required to place the electoral system changes in a larger context. Therefore, they reasoned that Assembly members would be less equipped than experts to reason on such issues, and possibly would not properly take into consideration some of the unintended consequences that were likely to follow. For primarily that reason, and the feeling that the Assembly process undermined the Legislature, they dismissed the legitimacy of the Assembly. In contrast, those in favour of reform were in support of the Assembly members’ capacity to reason felt that Assembly members were both representative of the greater population, and that members could learn and rise to the challenge of decision-making. Proponents of electoral reform thought the project was in fact “powerful”, but were not without reservations, as stated by one opinion leader, the Assembly members were, “...not just experts, not just ordinary folks, but ordinary folks that became expert. And legitimate randomness. Ourselves on our best day. It could have been me. They look and feel like our neighbors, but I wouldn’t support the recommendation just because they voted on it. These people have not been made God...place a good deal of weight because they have spoken. Their role however was to propose – not to decide.” Clearly, those who were predisposed against electoral change tended to dismiss the project, while those few who were in favour of change were more predisposed to embrace the process wholesale, albeit with reservations. And there was a disproportionate number inclined to reject the project all together. This is not entirely a surprise, as we found it well reflected in the journalistic discourse.

110. Notably there were two exceptions who indicated a thorough grasp of theory which included history, and an understanding of nuances such as the principles underlying citizen juries or the specific issues which such bodies are designed to address.

111. Anonymous interview responses.

112. *Ibid.*

Many of the opinion leaders who were opposed to reform were convinced that proportionality was overrepresented or over emphasized in the dialogue by Assembly members, and that this overrepresentation came at the expense of stability which was of greater value to them. They felt that their values were thus under threat as a consequence. Nothing that happened during the Assembly process changed their minds. Generally for those rejecting both the Assembly and the MMP recommendation, it was a binary choice – any system forwarded *must* ensure government stability to the same degree as FPTP, and any form of PR would undermine that value.¹¹³ Very little in the discussion of opinion leaders who were opposed to reform reflected consideration of any other choice or value. Nor did their opinion change as a result of the Assembly's deliberative process. No learning occurred. Instead the process appears to have strengthened or reinforced previously held beliefs. This positioning was simplistic when compared to the struggle and sophistication which was being demonstrated on the same subjects by the Assembly members.

Assembly members also valued stable government. But they valued it along with protection of local representation, accountability, demographic and geographic representation and concerns over the size of the Legislature and apprehensions about providing a solution that was saleable to the public. They became veritable electoral engineers trying to accommodate differences while protecting the values to which they gave priority. Assembly members agonized over trade offs, (e.g., Legislature size versus increasing the size of constituencies and reducing the number of local MMPs), understanding that they were infringing on values held by other Assembly members. And they were by no means single minded in favour of proportionality. Proportionality taken by itself would have moved the group radically toward a full PR system. A choice of this kind was never entertained. Instead, members opted for a compromise that stretched to balance and respect divergent values. The choice they made inarguably did offer greater proportionality (members thought of this as 'fairness of representation') than the existing FPTP model, but it also offered protection for those in the North and opportunity for greater women's representation, while maintaining local bonds between politicians and their respective communities. As one of the Assembly respondents noted in the interview:

"I believe that the process was successful in part because it considered the interests of a very diverse group of citizens. These are perspectives that aren't always included in the legislative process. In the Assembly, I think that we all learned from each other and used that knowledge to design the best electoral system we could."

Opinion leaders who were supportive also cared about greater proportionality or fairness, but did not agree with many of the specific aspects of the MMP proposal. Some of those in favour felt it did not go far enough (it was too tame); some would have preferred STV models which restricted party maneuvering, while others disliked the closed list aspect. Nevertheless they agreed that the recommendation, (although not ideal, or what they might design themselves) was a step forward for Ontario. There was a modest degree of learning in this group, but their views on electoral reform were less likely to be affected. The learning occurred while watching the Assembly process which had a profound affect on their opinions toward deliberation. They became convinced of the capacity of the average citizen and the

113. One of the opinion leaders in opposition indicated they would have been in favour of a Parallel model, which would ensure stability while affording some measure of compensation to smaller parties.

legitimacy of the process. Critically however, as a result, those supportive of the Assembly process compromised their original positioning on electoral reform, whereas those opposed did not change at all.

Finally, when asked the question, “If government were to suggest electoral change would you trust them?” we see the same clear pattern emerge once again. Those opposed to the Assembly process placed their trust in the elected parliament and those in support did not mistrust the government in general, but said that they would have to judge the recommendation on its merits. But they clearly noted that they would be cynical, as elected officials are more likely to support change which is to their benefit. Some went so far as to flat out say “no”, and indicated that, on this issue they placed more faith in the public at large, as they could escape self interest or partisan politics. In the end it comes down to acceptance of popular sovereignty. Those who feel that the legitimacy rests in the hands of the people, support attempts to graft popular will onto existing structures – those who do not – do not.

The Assembly did not fail to deliver on its mandate of respectful deliberation, but it appears that this respect was not reciprocated. The opinion leaders did not respect the Assembly. In this case the concept of popular sovereignty was unsupported, and resisted by those responsible for educating the public and leading the debate. Rather than being afforded respect, Assembly members were considered a ‘fringe’ and their value priorities were ignored or dismissed; they were derided by the by the opposing opinion leaders for holding what were considered deviant or contrary views which placed too much emphasis on proportionality. As John Ibbitson said of the negative response to the British Columbia Assembly, “...the ability of the elites to bend any process to their own ends should never be underestimated....it is those very elites that raise the most objections to electoral reform and citizens’ assemblies. Which makes one wonder whether what they most fear is losing their ability to dominate public discourse.”¹¹⁴ Their ability to dominate the discourse and frame the debate to reflect their values arguably had an affect on the outcome, as did the tone and bias of the media coverage.

The Referendum outcome

From the outset, there was little doubt that MMP was headed for defeat. The 60% threshold imposed by the government set a high bar for success, the press was hostile, and the public information campaign inadequate. A Strategic Counsel poll published in the *Globe & Mail* on October 9th suggested that a clear majority would vote against the proposal, although the poll also continued to find nearly a quarter or more of all voters undecided only a few days before the vote (table 5). Remarkably, three quarters of those polled by Strategic Counsel in the first week of October indicated that they had heard “only a little” or “nothing at all” about the issue. While the proportion of “undecided ” voters had gone down only slightly in comparison to a poll taken by the same organization about three weeks earlier, it also suggested that MMP had failed to win many converts over that period.¹¹⁵ An Angus Reid poll taken at about the same

114. John Ibbitson “Welcome to a new era of liberal democracy”, *Globe and Mail*, January 12, 2004.

115. Karen Howlett, “More voters understand proposed electoral changes, but fewer support them”, *Globe & Mail*, October 9, 2007, p. A10

time predicted defeat for MMP by a margin of 58-42.¹¹⁶

Table 5. Public opinion on the electoral reform proposal, September-October, 2007

a) Knowledge of the proposed changes (%)				
	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK/NA, etc.</u>
Oct. 6-7	24	51	24	1
Sept. 10-13	12	41	47	--

b) Probable vote (%)				
	<u>For MMP</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>DK/NA, etc.</u>
Oct. 6-7	32	35	22	11
Sept. 10-13	27	23	29	21

Strategic Counsel, as reported in the *Globe & Mail*, October 9, 2007

In the end, the defeat of the MMP proposal was even more decisive than the polls had predicted (table 5). Only 37% of Ontario voters supported MMP, while 63% cast their ballots in favour of FPTP. Five of the 107 constituencies returned a majority in favour of MMP – all of these in the Toronto area.¹¹⁷ Although MMP did slightly better in urban areas of the province than in rural areas, it failed to win a majority even in the Toronto area (table 6). Of the five ridings that did vote in favour of MMP, four returned NDP members in the election.¹¹⁸

116. Robert Benzie, “Polls Show Liberals Winning; Suggest PCs not Helped by Reversal on Schools”, *Toronto Star*, October 6, 2007, p. A16.

117. Beaches-East York (50.1%), Davenport (56.7%), Parkdale-High Park (54.5%), Toronto-Danforth (55.1%), and Trinity-Spadina (59.2%).

118. A Liberal was elected in Davenport.

Table 6. Referendum results

(%)	<u>Toronto area</u>	<u>All Ontario</u>
FPTP	56.3	63.1
MMP	43.7	36.9
	<u>Total votes cast</u>	<u>Turnout (%)</u>
Election	4,421,628	52.8
Referendum	4,284,336	51.1
Dropoff	<u>137,292</u>	<u>- 1.7</u>

Source: Elections Ontario (www.elections.on.ca)

While turnout in the election registered another historic low at 52.8%, most election voters also cast a ballot on the electoral reform proposal. The proportion of votes cast in the referendum was, at 51.1%, only slightly lower than in the election (table 6). In spite of the seeming lack of knowledge and interest in the issue, there was no significant “drop off” of voters such as often occurs on American state ballot propositions that are typically held in conjunction with general elections.¹¹⁹

Post election analyses of the vote emphasized many of the points noted earlier in identifying the kinds of information that filtered through to the electorate in a campaign that was largely invisible to many voters. The negative arguments that resonated were the simplest ones – the lack of sufficient information about the proposed new system, the increase in the size of the Legislature, and the oft-repeated charge by opponents of MMP that the lists would be controlled by “party bosses” (see table 4). There was some degree of receptivity to the more attractive features of MMP – the need for greater fairness in elections, the appeal of proportionality, and the desirability of a “second vote” (table 3). But an electorate that did not feel itself to be adequately informed found it difficult to overcome its uncertainty about how the new system would actually work. Cutler and Fournier argue that a more fully informed electorate might have been persuaded, based on evidence from a post election survey.¹²⁰ But, as they also note, voters would have needed greater knowledge of and *confidence* in the process that had produced the proposed change. The Citizens’ Assembly was an unknown entity for most of

119. Lawrence LeDuc, *The Politics of Direct Democracy* (Toronto, Broadview, 2003), pp. 137-152. Note that the “drop off” in the BC referendum was similar (2%).

120 Fred Cutler and Patrick Fournier, “Why Ontarians said NO to MMP”, *Globe and Mail*, October 25, 2007, p. A21

the electorate, and this lacuna deprived the proposed reform of the legitimacy that greater knowledge of the deliberative process that had produced it might have conferred.

In considering whether MMP might have ever had a chance of passing, even with better information both about the proposal and the Assembly, we need to also consider the role of the campaign. The late start and near absence of any real YES campaign meant that the bulk of the electorate was poorly informed. The NO campaign, confined largely to the mainstream print media, mattered, but resonated only with small segments of the electorate. The “public information campaign” was directed narrowly at advising people to vote, in the process counseling them to seek out information elsewhere. There was, in short, relatively little information to be had, and only the most pro-active voters were likely to find it. The Ontario campaign contrasts sharply with that in New Zealand, where there was both a highly effective public information campaign and intensive campaigns waged by well organized and well financed YES and NO umbrella organizations.¹²¹ In hypothesizing other possible outcomes in the Ontario referendum, one needs to consider what a more active campaign might have looked like. Certainly, it would have had to have been better financed, both on the public information side and on the part of those advocating the reform. Elections Ontario would also have had to interpret its mandate much less narrowly, informing voters about the content of the proposal and the nature of the arguments for and against it, rather than merely telling voters that there was going to be a referendum and that their vote was “important”.

Modern campaigns cost money, and the lack of any serious funding of the campaign for MMP undercut its effectiveness and deprived voters of the information that they needed to properly evaluate the proposed reform. However, the NO campaign was also largely non-existent, being confined primarily to the occasional columns by political journalists found on the inside pages of the major newspapers. These two observations are of course related. Given the ineffectiveness of the pro-MMP campaign, there was no real need for an organized NO effort. The doubts raised by skeptical journalists more or less did the job. Had there been a well organized and well financed YES campaign, and any real chance that MMP might pass, there almost certainly would have also been a serious NO campaign. This is essentially what happened in New Zealand. After the first referendum, it was clear that MMP enjoyed broad public support. Momentum for reform continued to build until the realization that it might actually pass triggered an effective and well financed NO campaign, waged largely with business funding by the Campaign for Better Government, an umbrella organization created to bring together business groups and opponents of MMP from within the major political parties. The fact that they succeeded in driving support down from well over 70% to the 53.9% obtained in the 1993 referendum is testimony to the effectiveness of that campaign. Had they been operating under a 60 percent rule like that imposed in Ontario and BC, electoral reform in New Zealand would not have happened.

This illustrates how difficult it is to secure passage of almost any type of reform proposal in a referendum. The more complex the issue, the greater the difficulty of putting it across to voters in a short campaign. The 2005 referendums on the European Constitutional Treaty in France and The Netherlands, the 2001 Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty all resulted in the defeat of proposals that initially appeared to enjoy broad public support. So too did our own

121. Alan McRobie (ed.), *Taking It to the People: The New Zealand Electoral Referendum Debate*. (Christchurch NZ, Hazard Press, 1993).

1992 referendum on the Charlottetown constitutional proposals and the 1999 Australian referendum on abolition of the monarchy. What these cases have in common are the complexity of the issues involved, the relatively short duration of the campaigns, and the inherent effectiveness of negative campaigning. The political advantage in referendum campaigns, particularly those dealing with unfamiliar issues, often seems to rest with the NO side. Those opposed to a proposal do not necessarily have to make a coherent case against it. Often, it is enough merely to raise doubts about it in the minds of voters, question the motives of its advocates, or play upon a natural fear of the unknown.¹²²

A successful Citizens' Assembly: a failed referendum debate

Over the course of this research, we asked ourselves many times if anything could have produced a super majority (60% of the total vote and a majority in 60% of the ridings) for the Assembly recommendation and thus prevented the failure of the reform proposal that they recommended to the voters. Such an outcome is unlikely when you add up all of the impediments that existed, some of which may have been unintended while others quite simply reflected political self interest. Following the Assembly recommendation, public opinion remained relatively stable, voters continued to be poorly informed, and the campaign itself had little effect, except perhaps to drive turnout rates down.¹²³ Voters gained little knowledge of either the Assembly process or the reform proposal and were not swayed one way or another by the arguments for and against reform. The most persuasive argument in the minds of NO voters remained that of "too little information". However, the outcome of the referendum does not negate the success of the Citizen's Assembly experiment. Although imperfect, the Assembly process facilitated the grafting of new concepts of public sovereignty onto existing structures, constructively enabling the average citizen to weigh in during the policy formation stage. The Assembly for the most part was broadly representative of Ontario society, and it produced respectful debate that was informed, and generally free from partisan interest or interference. Perhaps most critically it was inclusive in its consideration of opinion that was not merely the majority or dominant position of the group. The process surrounding deliberation was a qualified success; the referendum less so. Of course, it cannot be said that the Ontario electorate's rejection of the MMP proposal was a mistake. It was important that the voters were able to render the final verdict on the proposal put forward by their fellow citizens. However, the information gap between the Assembly and the public was wide. If the Assembly members, as a true "mini public", could develop a near consensus on electoral reform through deliberation, why couldn't the larger public? In interviews with Assembly members well after the referendum campaign, some expressed disappointment that the passion and commitment that members demonstrated during the process was not communicated to the public. One member in particular acknowledged that electoral reform could be viewed as "boring" but in fact, given the divergent points of views of Assembly members throughout the process, was "anything but". He cited the fact that members showed commitment to the recommendation by speaking about it

122. Lawrence LeDuc, "Voting NO: the Negative Bias in Referendum Campaigns", paper presented to the ECPR Joint Sessions Workshops, Helsinki, May 7-12, 2007.

123. Turnout rates for this election were at an all time low. This of course can be credited to the lack of contest, but also perhaps can be attributed in some small way to the press's constant reminders that the issues were too complicated for voters to understand.

publicly long after the process had officially ended as evidence of their passion. This illustrates the high level of citizen engagement demonstrated by Assembly members throughout the process. Voters largely missed the irony of rejecting out of hand a proposal so carefully crafted by citizens “just like them.”

There is of course no assurance that more public information alone would have produced a different result. Deliberative democracy and direct democracy are different processes, and the dynamic of a referendum campaign will typically be quite different than that of a deliberative body.¹²⁴ Research on other referendums demonstrates that it is no easy matter to persuade the public to embrace change – even in New Zealand where a successful reform did take place. Were it not so, the constitutional question in Canada would have been settled long ago, Swedes would be using the Euro, and Australia would be a republic. Nevertheless, we do know is that if experiments of this kind are to succeed in the future, the public need to be better informed and more completely integrated into the larger process. One important difference between the British Columbia and Ontario referendums was that, in BC, it was the recommendation of the Assembly that helped to legitimize STV for many voters.¹²⁵ In Ontario, more or less the opposite occurred. The Assembly was an unknown quantity for most voters, and its negative portrayal in the media made it more of a liability than an asset in generating support for MMP. It was indeed a quiet referendum, in which only a small number of voices – largely negative ones – were heard. But it is nevertheless clear that “public brokerage” is a goal that cannot be abandoned, in Ontario or elsewhere, if our “democratic deficit” is to be addressed in any meaningful way.¹²⁶ As one of our respondents stated in the conclusion to her final interview:

“Although our MMP recommendation didn’t get the support it needed to pass the October 10th referendum, I am proud that I was a part of this unique exercise. I believe that the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly can, and should, serve as a model of deliberative democracy that can be used to discuss future policy issues, such as action on climate change. Being part of the Citizens’ Assembly is definitely an experience that I’ll remember for a lifetime. “

124. See, for example, Arthur Lupia and Richard Johnston. 2001. “Are Voters to Blame? Voter Competence and Elite Maneuvers in Referendums” in Matthew Mendelsohn and Andrew Parkin, *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites, and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

125. Fred Cutler, Richard Johnston, R. Kenneth Carty, André Blais, and Patrick Fournier, “Deliberation, Information, and Trust: the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly as Agenda Setter”, in Mark Warren and Hilary Pearce, *Designing Deliberative Democracy: the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

126. Matthew Mendelsohn, “Public Brokerage: Constitutional Reform and the Accommodation of Mass Publics”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33: 245-272 (2000); Brian Tanguay, “Reforming Representative Democracy: Taming Canada’s Democratic Deficit”, in James Bickerton and Alain Gagnon, *Canadian Politics*, 4th edition, (Toronto: Broadview, 2004).

Appendix A: Interview Schedule 1 -- Citizen Assembly Member Interviews

Face to Face, Scheduled during the initial phase of the deliberation process

- 1) **Initial Response** - Can you tell me how you felt – what was your initial reaction, when the Citizens' Assembly contacted you?
(probes: glad to be included in civic project, anxious, annoyed, reluctant)
- 2) **Decision to Participate** - What made you decide to participate in the Assembly process?
(probes: was it one factor, or a combination of things? Did anyone influence you in either direction?)
- 3) **Youth Identity** – Do you see yourself as representing viewpoints of others? Or, do you feel you are speaking for a specific group of people in your role as Assembly member? If yes, which one?
(probes: do you identify with other youth participants; other women; your cultural background; your region: your party? Who are you representing when you speak?)
- 4) **The Assembly Organization and Process** - Tell me about your experiences with the process itself - were you satisfied with the organization of the Assembly process? Would you change anything? If so – what?
(probes: too much information to digest? unclear? bias? Time frame too short?)
- 5) **Deliberation Process** - Did you feel comfortable to forward your opinion and discuss ideas?
(probes: were people generally responsive to other people's suggestions? Did you see anyone change their mind? Did your opinion change? Were certain speakers dominant? Were certain ideas dominant?)
- 6) **Values** - Do you feel that the things that are important to you are being discussed/addressed through this process? Why, or why not?
(probe: Do you perceive a difference in values? Which values do you think are most important to you?)
- 7) **Government** – Have you changed the way you look at government as a result of your participation?
(probe: if government were to suggest electoral change would you trust them? Are you comfortable with the role the government played in the Assembly process?)
- 8) **Expectations** - Thinking back to before you attended the meetings, what were your expectations? How were those expectations changed by the process?
(probes: larger role, more direction, less complicated, more complicated?)
- 9) **Your Contribution** - Do you feel that you made a difference – or were able to influence the process? Would you do it again?
(probe: was the process rewarding or disappointing to you – why, or why not? Did you want to have more influence than you did – was there anything stopping you? Was age a factor?)

10) **The Process as a Democratic Alternative** – Do you see the Assembly process as a viable alternative in policy-making – why, or why not?

(probe: citizens are incapable? Process of referenda does not work? Government manipulates process? Too expensive, or time consuming? Conversely, it is more credible as citizens do not have vested interest in outcome?)

Getting to Know a Little about You

Age: 25+ ___ Under 25___

Gender: male ___ female ___

Born in Canada: yes ___ no ___ If no, country of origin _____

Highest Level of Education

Less than High School _____

High School _____

Some community college or university _____ Graduated University _____

Level of Interest in Politics

Read Newspaper: daily ____, weekly ____, rarely ____, never _____

Watch News: daily ____, weekly ____, rarely ____, never _____

Internet research: daily ____, weekly ____, rarely ____, never _____

Political party membership: yes ____, no _____

Interest Group membership: yes ____, no _____

Have you ever signed a petition: yes ____, no _____

Did you vote in the last election: yes ____, no _____

Volunteered in Political Campaign yes ____, no _____

Feelings about Politics

Politicians can be trusted.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree _____

I would feel guilty if I did not vote.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree _____

Politics is too complicated for me to understand.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree _____

It is the government's responsibility to fix problems – not mine Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___

Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree _____

My values are reflected by politicians

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree _____

We would probably solve most of our big problems if decisions could be brought back to the people. Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

Politicians have lost touch with the people.

Strongly Agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly Disagree ____

Feelings about Participation in the Assembly

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 very satisfied, how satisfied were you with the following:

- Caliber of the Instruction - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Caliber of Facilitators - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Amount of Information - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Pace of Information - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Explanation - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Ability to speak freely - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Ability to understand - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Concerns addressed - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Values discussed - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Cooperation of Peers - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Time Well Spent - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Your Influence - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Decision to participate - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Your contribution - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied
- Government support - Not at all 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ very satisfied

Appendix B: Interview Schedule 2 -- Opinion Leader Interviews

1) **Initial Response** - Can you tell me how you felt – what was your initial reaction, when you heard that there would be Citizens' Assembly to review the electoral system in Ontario?

(probes: what do you think of the conception of deliberative democracy in the abstract? Do you have any general concerns or reservations about the idea?)

2) **Importance of the Assembly Process** – How important did you think this was? Did you have a chance to attend or follow the proceedings of the Assembly?

(probes: specifics? why was it important or not important to you? What did you think about what you witnessed or what you know?)

3) **Assessment of the Assembly Organization and Process** - Tell me about your understanding or experiences with the process itself - were you satisfied with the organization of the Assembly process? Would you change anything? If so – what?

(probes: too much information to digest? unclear? bias? Time frame too short? Biased?)

4) **Theory of Deliberative Democracy specifically** – What are your thoughts on deliberative democracy itself?

(probes: would you say it is normatively good/or bad? Concerns? Do you see it as an alternative for subjects where there are conflicts of interest?)

5) **Group Capacity and Representativeness**– Do you have confidence in the group's ability to reason? Do you think this group is representative of the capacity of the public generally?

(probes: complexity of issues, education, understanding of politics, reasoning capacity).

6) **Legitimacy** - Do you see the Assembly process as a viable alternative in policy-making – why, or why not? And finally, do you think their decision should be viewed as being legitimate?

(probe: citizens are incapable? Process of referenda does not work? Government manipulates process? Too expensive, or time consuming? Conversely, it is more credible as citizens do not have vested interest in outcome?)

7) **Outcome** – Do you like the Assembly proposal? Why or why not? How do you think Ontario citizens will react to the proposal?

(probe: How important was "how the Ontario public will react" in the deliberations? And how important do you think it should have been?)

8) **Identity** – Have you written on the topic of electoral reform or the Assembly proceedings? And when you write do you see yourself as representing viewpoints of others? Who would that be? Is there a particular position that you take?

(probe: do you identify with the public and tap into public opinion; the political class; women; minorities; responsible government? Who are you representing when you speak?)

9) **Values** - Do you feel that the things that are important to you have been discussed in this forum and addressed through this process? Why, or why not?

(probe: Where did the Assembly get it right, or get it wrong with respect to your values? Do you perceive a difference in values? Which values do you think are most important to you?)

10) **Change** – Have you changed your mind with respect to electoral reform in any way as a result of this process taking place? And have you changed your mind about the capacity or validity of deliberative democracy as a result of this process?

(probe: were you likely to have supported or rejected this proposal prior to the process? What do attribute this shift specifically?)

11) **Government** – Alternatively, if government were to suggest electoral change would you trust them?

(probe: are you comfortable with the role the government played in the Assembly process? Why do you think they launched such an initiative?)

Appendix C: Content Analysis Summary (Newspapers)

	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Information</u>	<u>Total</u>
<i><u>Globe and Mail</u></i>				
Assembly only	0	0	1	1
Assembly and Electoral	3	2	3	8
Electoral	6	11	3	20
Referendum	0	5	5	10
	9	18	12	39
	23%	46%	31%	
<i><u>Toronto Star</u></i>				
Assembly only	0	0	2	2
Assembly and Electoral	1	7	7	15
Electoral	9	13	12	34
Referendum	0	6	2	8
	10	26	23	59
	17%	44%	39%	
<i><u>National Post</u></i>				
Assembly only	0	0	0	0
Assembly and Electoral	1	0	1	2
Electoral	3	9	7	19
Referendum	0	2	3	5
	4	11	11	26
	15%	42%	42%	
<i><u>Aggregate</u></i>				
Assembly only	0	0	3	3
Assembly and Electoral	5	9	11	25
Electoral	18	33	22	73
Referendum	0	13	10	23
Total	23	55	46	124
	19%	44%	37%	

Summary of Newspaper Articles by date, ranking, subject and author

Toronto Star

Date	+/- / Information	Subject	Author
March 28, 2006	Negative	Both	Editorial
March 28, 2006	Information	Both	Ian Urquhart
April 16, 2006	Positive	Electoral	Kenneth Kidd
June 7, 2006	Information	Both	Carol Goar
Sept 9, 2006	Negative	Both	Ian Urquhart
Oct 25, 2006	Information	Both	Robert Benzie
Jan. 8, 2007	Information	Both	Carol Goar
Jan. 18, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie
Jan. 26, 2007	Information	Both	Kerry Gillespie
Feb. 22, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Ian Urquhart
Feb. 23, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
Feb. 26, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie
March 5, 2007	Information	Assembly	Ian Urquhart
March 31, 2007	Information	Both	Robert Benzie
April 3, 2007	Information	Both	Robert Benzie
April 4, 2007	Negative	Both	Ian Urquhart
April 7, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie
April 16, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie
April 16, 2007	Information	Electoral	Editorial
April 18, 2007	Information	Electoral	Rob Ferguson
May 3, 2007	Positive	Both	Joe Murray
May 10, 2007	Negative	Both	David Brock
May 16, 2007	Negative	Both	Ian Urquhart
May 22, 2007	Negative	Both	Richard Gwyn
June 10, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Ian Urquhart
June 21, 2007	Information	Electoral	Rob Ferguson
July 2, 2007	Information	Both	Ian Urquhart
August 2, 2007	Information	Electoral	Rob Ferguson
August 6, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
Sept. 9, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Murray White
Sept. 10, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Kerry Gillespie
Sept 11, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Robert Benzie
Sept 12, 2007	Information	Referendum	Robert Benzie
Sept. 14, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Rosemary Speirs
Sept, 14, 2007	Negative	Electoral	George Taylor
Sept. 16, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Paul de Man
Sept. 18, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Linda McQuaig
Sept 22, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Editorial
Sept. 22, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Robert Witherell
Sept 23, 2007	Information	Referendum	-
Sept. 25, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Susan Heenan
Sept. 25, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Ricardo Giorgi
Sept. 26, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Ian Urquhart

Sept, 27, 2007	Information	Assembly	Kerry Gillespie
Sept. 27, 2007	Information	Referendum	Estella Cohen
Sept. 29, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Michael Ufford
Oct 3, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Rob Ferguson
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Rob Ferguson
Oct 5, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Larry Gordon
Oct. 5, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Brian Henry
Oct 5, 2007	Information	Electoral	Kerry Gillespie
Oct 6, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Dennis Pilon
Oct 7, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Andrew Chung
Oct 7, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Haroon Siddiqui
Oct 7, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Garnet Fraser
Oct 9, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie
Oct, 9, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
Oct 10, 2007	Information	Electoral	Robert Benzie

National Post

Date	+/- / Information	Subject	Author
March 31, 2006	Negative	Electoral	Lawrence Solomon
Aril 27, 2006	Information	Electoral	-
November 8, 2006	Positive	Electoral	Andrew Coyne
April 11, 2007	Positive	Both	Andrew Coyne
April 16, 2007	Information	Both	Lee Greenberg
April 17, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
April 18, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Andrew Coyne
Sept 8, 2007	Information	Electoral	Mary Vallis
Sept 11, 2007	Negative	Electoral	George Radwanski
Sept 14, 2007	Information	Electoral	Mary Vallis
Sept 15, 2007	Information	Electoral	Mary Vallis
Sept 17, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Mary Vallis
Sept 21, 2007	Information	Electoral	Don Butler
Sept 22, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Mary Vallis
Sept 25, 2007	Information	Electoral	Philip Green
Sept 26, 2007	Negative	Electoral	John Carver
Sept 29, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Andrew Coyne
Sept 29, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Peter Wolstencroft
Oct 2, 2007	Information	Referendum	Dennis Pilon
Oct 3, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
Oct 4, 2007	Information	Referendum	James Cowan
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Colby Cosh
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Lawrence Solomon
Oct 9, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Loren Gunter
Oct 10, 2007	Information	Electoral	Mary Vallis

Globe and Mail

Date	+/- / Information	Subject	Author
Sept 1, 2006	Negative	Electoral	Murray Campbell
Oct 10, 2006	Information	Referendum	Murray Campbell
Oct 26, 2006	Positive	Both	Dennis Pilon
Nov 18, 2006	Information	Assembly	Bert Archer
April 7, 2007	Negative	Both	Murray Campbell
April 14, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Editorial
April 15, 2007	Information	Both	Chinta Puxley
April 16, 2007	Information	Both	Martin Mittlestaedt
April 17, 2007	Information	Electoral	Murray Campbell
April 18, 2007	Information	Referendum	Murray Campbell
April 19, 2007	Negative	Both	Murray Campbell
April 20, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Rick Anderson
May 15, 2007	Positive	Both	E Broadbent/HSegal
May 16, 2007	Information	Both	Michael Oliveira
May 16, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Jeffrey Simpson
July 18, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Christopher Holcraft
July 26, 2007	Positive	Both	Lawrence LeDuc
Aug. 2, 2007	Positive	Both	Peter MacLeod
Sept 5, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Neil Reynolds
Sept 5, 2007	Positive	Electoral	John Barber
Sept 12, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Tom Kierans
Sept 17, 2007	Information	Electoral	Bill Curry
Sept 17, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Murray Campbell
Sept 18, 2007	Negative	Electoral	David Balcon
Sept 21, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Ivor Tosell
Sept 21, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Rick Salutin
Sept 24, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Karen Howlett
Oct 1, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Roy Macgregor
Oct 3, 2007	Information	Electoral	Caroline Alphonso
Oct 3, 2007	Information	Referendum	Paul Waldie
Oct 3, 2007	Positive	Electoral	Tom Kent
Oct 4, 2007	Information	Referendum	K Howlett and P Waldie
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Peter Woolstencroft
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Referendum	Rick Pearce
Oct 4, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Editorial
Oct 5, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Jeffrey Simpson
Oct 8, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Gordon Gibson
Oct 8, 2007	Information	Electoral	Tobi Cohen
Oct 9, 2007	Information	Referendum	Karen Howlett
Oct 9, 2007	Negative	Electoral	Patrick Monahan

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