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Thursday 1 September 2005

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 1^{er} septembre 2005

**Select committee on
electoral reform**

**Comité spécial de la
réforme électorale**

Chair: Caroline Di Cocco
Clerk: Anne Stokes

Présidente : Caroline Di Cocco
Greffière : Anne Stokes

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

COMITÉ SPÉCIAL DE LA RÉFORME ÉLECTORALE

Thursday 1 September 2005

Jeudi 1^{er} septembre 2005

The committee met at 1300 in committee room 1, following a closed session.

GREEN PARTY OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Caroline Di Cocco): Let me call this meeting to order. We have before us Mr. Newman, the deputy leader of the Green Party of Ontario, making a deputation before this committee. Welcome. We look forward to what you have to say.

Mr. Rob Newman: Madam Chair, members of the committee and guests, I'd like to begin our conversation today by saying a few thank-yous. First, I want to thank you on behalf of the Green Party of Ontario for inviting us to present to you today. This is the first time we have been given the opportunity to speak before a committee, and we're honoured to be asked. We're prepared to be in the Legislature with you, and it's encouraging to see that you're beginning to do the same.

Secondly, I want to thank the current governing party for moving forward on their commitment to consider electoral reform in Ontario. It's something that we as a political party and others as non-governmental organizations have been working for a long time to see happen. This will be an important conversation for the citizens of Ontario, and I thank you on their behalf for giving them a space to have it.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the members of all the parties for taking the initiative through this committee to educate yourselves about voting systems, both the one you know and the many you may not. As elected members, you've been given our trust to act on what you believe is in the best interests of the citizens of Ontario, and given the importance of a conversation about how to choose our representatives, what you have to say in the matter could have a tremendous impact, positively or negatively.

My goal today will not be to recommend to you one system of voting over another. You heard from the experts on such things yesterday, and I trust them to do a better job of explaining the details than I can. Nor will it be my job today to convince you of how the current system is overly unfair to certain groups of candidates and voters. The simple fact that we're sitting here today having a conversation about this is largely due to the work of groups like the three who will follow me later this afternoon, and I trust that they'll continue to do this work this afternoon.

Today, my goal will be to speak to you, as one political party to three others, about the importance of truly empowering the citizens of Ontario to have their say about how they want to choose their representatives, empowering them through a citizens' assembly followed by a binding referendum on the recommendations of that assembly.

Specifically, the Green Party of Ontario believes it should be the role of this committee, while not recommending or working toward any one particular outcome, to facilitate the work of the citizens' assembly and to see that their work delivers results. To that end, we'll look at why I believe that as political parties, we should be excusing ourselves from the debate. I'll ask you to reconsider some preconceptions that surround discussions about proportional representation, and we'll look at the results of a similar effort that took place in BC and what role I think you can play to have the work we do in Ontario be successful for Ontarians.

I've heard some of the members of this committee say that their job here is limited to hearing from the practitioners. I believe it's more than that, but as of today, you can consider that requirement satisfied. I speak to you on behalf of 102 practitioners from the past provincial election and another one from a recent by-election, our leader, Frank de Jong. I wish I could read the names of each candidate so that their achievements as candidates can be recorded in Hansard, but I'll be respectful of everyone's time and mention just a few of them, some of whom you may know. There's Brad Gray, Glen Hodgson, Adam Duncan, Ernst Braendli, Chris Bradshaw, Tom Mason, Jaimie Board, John Baranyi and Dan Craig. Do any of you recognize any of these names?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Just Tom Mason.

Mr. Newman: You may recognize Tom Mason, yes. Well, these are candidates who ran with each of you in the most recent provincial election, and they consider it an honour to have had the opportunity. To use the words of my dear friend and our former deputy leader, Peter Elgie, each of these people, much like you, is an ordinary citizen with an extraordinary commitment to your fellow Ontarians. While I mean this with all the respect accorded to you as elected politicians and the experience that comes with that, there really is little difference, as citizens, between the candidates I mentioned and the successful candidates I'm speaking to today.

Of course, there is one difference: In 2003, the candidates of the Green Party of Ontario received close to 3% of the votes cast across the province, and today they have 0% of the say on what happens in the provincial Legislature. Collectively, the nine members of this committee received 4.5% of the votes cast in that election, and today you have 9% of the say.

Of course, I have to keep the promise that I made earlier. My point here is not to suggest that one party is particularly hard done by or that Ontario would be in a better or worse place if candidates from some other party were here in greater or lesser numbers. The point I'm making today is that electoral systems have a tremendous effect on the outcome of elections and the candidates who run in them. In fact, I don't think it's possible to overstate the effect that electoral systems have on the final outcome. After all, it's their effect that defines them. The choice of a voting system will in many ways determine the makeup of our Legislature and the structure of the government we get. It's a very important decision.

The current first-past-the-post electoral system has an equal but opposite effect on you and me. The Green Party of Ontario recognizes that it has such an effect on us. That's why we as a party will not be advocating any one form of voting over another. We know that we have too much invested in the outcome of such a choice to be an impartial contributor. Rather, we will be investing our efforts in a commitment that citizens of Ontario have their say through a citizens' assembly, followed by a referendum on the assembly's recommendations. To put it another way, we know that the foxes should not be minding the henhouse. The Green Party of Ontario has a vested interest in the outcome of this conversation, as do each of you. We will be stepping back to allow it to follow its natural course, and we invite you all to do the same.

In fact, it's been my experience, to continue on a theme introduced by Ms. Di Cocco, that the art of politics is about knowing when to provide input and knowing when to excuse ourselves from the conversation and allow others to have their say.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Did you say that?

Mr. Newman: No, that was my bit. Hers was about knowing when to look at bridges and when not to go look at bridges.

So if you're going to be facilitating, if not necessarily taking part in conversations about voting systems, there are certain terms that will consistently come up. As people with extensive experience in one particular voting system, you may have some preconceptions about what those terms mean. I'd like to take the time to ask you to rethink some of these ideas and invite you to keep an open mind throughout the conversations.

To give you an example, you're going to hear a lot about wasted votes when people talk about first-past-the-post, and it's pretty easy to see how votes cast for the candidates who do not win could be considered wasted.

For example, while I respect that each of you here received the most votes of any candidate in your ridings, none of you received all the votes. In fact, in seven of the ridings represented here, more people voted for someone other than you than actually voted for you. I'm not going to name any names.

These kinds of wasted votes are easy to talk about—it's an obvious critique of a current voting system—but like I said, what I'd like to do here today is expand your understanding to consider, for example, another kind of wasted vote. I'd like you to consider wasted votes cast for the winners.

Now, Ms. Wynne, of your fellow committee members, you were the most successful candidate in the last general election. You received 23,488 votes, 52.6% of the valid ballots cast in Don Valley West. Congratulations.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Thank you.

Mr. Newman: You're welcome.

However, looking back, 2.6% of the ballots cast in that election were unnecessary to secure your victory, and perhaps those extra 1,159 people would have liked to have voted differently if they knew you were going to win. But that's not a luxury we have under—

Ms. Wynne: No, no, they all—

Mr. Newman: And that very well may have been the case.

Ms. Wynne: I talked to each of them.

Interjections.

The Chair: I'm going to bring the committee to order.

Mr. Newman: My point here is not to advocate for a particular system of voting that has a preferential ballot. What I want you to do is keep an open mind about concepts like wasted votes. You would do the biggest service to the people of Ontario if you leave your present understandings at the door and come at these issues from new angles you may not have considered.

I've also heard comments from sitting MPPs who say that considering proportional representation in Ontario will mean the end of local representation as we know it. I want to establish today that such comments are either misinformed or disingenuous. I don't believe there is any organization in Canada that has seriously recommended any form of proportional representation that does away with local representatives. Local representation is something that Canadians have come to expect from their democracy, and the systems of proportional representation being considered federally and in every province looking into the matter have all had local representatives at their core.

The Green Party of Ontario respects that local representation will be the cornerstone of any PR system we have in this province. The models recommended by Fair Vote Canada, the primary non-partisan organization on the issue, all have local representation at their starting point. The Law Commission of Canada recommended a form of PR that included local representation. So, to repeat: Statements that proportional representation in Ontario will mean an end to local representation are

either misinformed or disingenuous. Actually, since I've mentioned it here today at this committee considering electoral reform, in moving forward such statements can no longer be considered misinformed and only the other option.

Another comment that comes up often in discussions of PR is that it leads to unstable government. Well, that might be true, but I guess it depends upon your definition of stability. Personally, I can't think of anything more unstable than a province being run for eight years by the members of one party, then being run for the next eight years entirely by members of a different party, then having the next four years be solely the responsibility of a third party, and then back again to eight years by the first party, and so on and so on. In fact, if asked, I think that the ruling party of the day could wax poetic on the instability involved in taking over the books of the province without the co-operation of any members from the previous ruling party. Again, co-operation is something that our current voting system does not encourage.

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Stability, for me, is having some of the people at the table in a new government be members who sat at the table in the former government. The balance of power may shift around the parties at the table and members will come and go, but stability will be provided by continuity and accountability that extends beyond election dates. The Green Party of Ontario believes that the citizens of Ontario will be better served with that kind of stability.

Will it take a little longer to get things done this way? Maybe. Then again, looking back, maybe the decision about how much to cut from the budget for water testing in Ontario is a decision that should have in fact taken a little longer. Voters don't ask for expediency. They ask for the decisions that are in their best interest, and I believe they are willing to wait for those decisions if it means a better future for themselves and their fellow Ontarians. So I say it again: PR results in greater stability in government as a going concern.

The last preconception I'd like to address is the fact that these conversations about proportional representation are complex and beyond the ability of everyday citizens to consider. Some of you disagree, but I believe that the citizens of Ontario are up to the challenge. To believe anything else would paint a very dire picture of the future, considering the many challenges that lay ahead of us. Frankly, if you don't trust the citizens who elected you to make informed choices, I think it would be rather difficult for you to sit there as an elected representative, given that they are the ones who chose you. It's a pretty simple point: I don't think you can have it both ways.

I'd like to end today by sharing with you some of the things we can learn from a conversation I had with a young woman who is a member of the citizens' assembly in BC. Chérie Mostrovich is an excellent example of an ordinary citizen who, prior to her involvement in the citizens' assembly, had not been politically active, let alone ever stopped to consider the process by which

representatives were elected. She is the very person I think some of you are afraid may not be able to deal with these complex issues. Having spoken with her, I can only believe that we'd all benefit from having more people like her involved in our decisions.

Ms. Mostrovich's overall impression of the process was very positive. For her, it was a worthwhile experience and an opportunity she was glad to have. She found the education she received as part of the process invaluable both for her work on the assembly and for her involvement as a citizen in BC. Looking back on her involvement, Ms. Mostrovich believes that her participation did have an impact on the province. She feels that her voice was truly heard and she wouldn't hesitate, were she asked again, to take part in a similar process. It's my understanding that there are very few 25-year-old women who have a similar view of the political process. Seen in this light, a citizens' assembly pays dividends in terms of citizen engagement beyond whatever specific outcome may result in the short term. Citizens want to play a part and they take their responsibilities seriously when asked.

Despite her positive experience, Ms. Mostrovich did have some comments about what didn't work in the BC citizens' assembly. These comments as a participant in a process that we are considering here are valuable. I hope you hear them and, as a committee, make it your responsibility to see that these same errors are not repeated here.

Ms. Mostrovich made the point to me that in any group of people who come together to make a decision, there will always be a small group that is more influential than others. While she has no criticisms of the personal behaviour of any of her fellow assembly members, there was a certain small group that became attached to one particular outcome and spent tremendous effort to ensure that that became the sole recommendation of the assembly. There was even a push by this group, toward the conclusion of the citizens' assembly, that their decision appear unanimous, and a request was made that no members of the citizens' assembly speak publicly about other options that were discussed.

While on the one hand it is inspiring to think that in a group of 160 randomly selected citizens there would be some who care passionately about a particular voting system, on the other hand it will be important to have a body, such as this committee, that can ensure that the members of a citizens' assembly can do their work free of what some others might see as bullying. We are fortunate in Ontario to have a select committee and we would like to see you acting as impartial referees in a process that some may not have had experience with.

I believe you would also serve a valuable role if you recommended to the Legislature the terms of reference for the citizens' assembly. Ms. Mostrovich commented that the terms of reference provided to the citizens' assembly in BC were not necessarily limiting to their conversations. She appreciated that boundaries had to be set, and of course such boundaries will have an impact on the outcome. An example of such a constraint was the instruction that in BC they could not make any recom-

mendations that changed the number of elected members in BC. Such a hard and fast rule had a direct impact on the outcome of the assembly's work. Ms. Mostrovich feels that some flexibility would have given her fellow committee members more latitude to consider a wider range of options. We recommend that this committee take the time to consider and recommend the proper balance between constraint and flexibility in any guidance given to a citizens' assembly.

Another important consideration was that the BC citizens' assembly was limited to providing a single recommendation. Ms. Mostrovich feels, and the Green Party of Ontario believes, that it would have been better for the assembly to have made two or three recommendations and ask citizens to choose their preferred option. This would go a long way to reducing the pressure a small group could exert on the outcome, since the final choice would be the responsibility of the voters at large and not just that of the assembly.

A referendum to choose between multiple options would also prevent an unclear result like the one we now have in BC. The referendum there did not pass, but does that mean that voters there support the current system? Does it mean that they support some other system, just not the one recommended? Or does it mean that they were simply unclear about the option as presented to them?

Which brings us to Ms. Mostrovich's biggest disappointment as a participant: The BC government put extremely few resources into education leading up to the referendum that followed the assembly's recommendation. That's odd, considering the impact of the decision on the people of BC. Members of the assembly who were interested in seeing their recommendation accepted or at the very least properly considered were forced to contribute their own time and money to answer any questions or speak on behalf of the recommendation.

The most important recommendation that this committee can make is that the government commit to a full education campaign following the recommendations of the citizens' assembly and before those recommendations are considered by the voters in a referendum. The people who are committed to a fairer voting system in Ontario are not going to allow the same thing to happen here that happened in BC. We will not allow a decision about whether or not money is spent on education to depend on the current governing party's position in the polls leading up to the next election. I do believe in the commitment this government has to the process. The validity of my belief will be confirmed when I hear a similar commitment to ensuring that no voter approaches a referendum unclear about their choices, as was the case in BC.

Also disappointing for Ms. Mostrovich was the hypocrisy implicit in the criteria required for the recommendation to be accepted by the referendum. She found it odd that while MLAs in BC seemed to be comfortable to receive only about half the vote, and in some cases less than half the vote, as we've seen earlier, they would turn around and impose two far more difficult conditions on a

vote to change the system that elected them in the first place. Once again, this committee can be the referee we need to ensure that such things do not happen in Ontario.

Chérie's final advice was to take the time to properly consider who will be sitting on the citizens' assembly. BC is to be commended for their initiative to ensure that each riding was represented by a man and a woman. They should also be recognized for addressing another imbalance by inviting two members from First Nations communities to sit on the assembly. While it may be impossible to ensure that every group is represented fairly when choosing members at random for this group, we believe that a better job should be done here in Ontario to have younger voters represented.

By Ms. Mostrovich's count, about 10% of the citizens' assembly in BC was under the age of 30 and more than half the participants were over the age of 50. She felt that a lack of younger voices on the assembly led to a certain comfort with the status quo or, seen another way, fear of change. It is her opinion, and I have to say that I share it, that since it is younger voters who will have to live with this outcome longer, they should have a greater say in the recommendation. I can appreciate that it is particularly difficult to get younger people, busy building their careers or raising their families, to take on additional responsibilities like being a member of a citizens' assembly. That's why I ask this committee to ensure that the resources are made available to ensure that the voice of younger voters is part of the conversation.

Before I wrap up, I'd like to repeat how grateful the Green Party of Ontario is to have been given the opportunity to speak with you today. Like you, we do not take our responsibilities lightly, and I'm confident you've given us your full attention and I hope you've found all this valuable.

So what did you hear from me today? I spoke first about what the Green Party does not believe your job as a committee should be. You and I have far too much invested in the outcome of a conversation about voting systems to not excuse ourselves from the debate. I believe you are capable of going beyond the mandate of simply defending the interests of politicians elected under the current system, and so do the people who elected you.

I talked about some common misconceptions that surround conversations about PR. As much as possible, I invite you to consider that many of these misconceptions arise from understanding only one type of voting system, and I ask you to continue to look beyond those definitions and have an open mind as you move deeper into these discussions. A narrow mind will leave you unable to see the big picture.

Finally, I gave you an outline of what I think the select committee should be responsible for. I believe this select committee can do some wonderful work to facilitate the process here in Ontario and prevent some of the unfortunate things that happened in BC from happening here. We congratulate BC for being the first, but it's important to learn from their experiences.

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The people of this province have put their trust in you and, while the 10 of us here have too much invested in this outcome to be impartial, we can certainly be there to ensure that the process we are undertaking is fair and is truly an opportunity for all citizens to make a choice for themselves about who represents them and how they're chosen. I believe that as members of this committee you have the opportunity to be remembered as nine politicians who chose to do the right thing and who restored integrity to a much-maligned process. I invite you to take advantage of that opportunity. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation. I now will open the floor to questions.

Mr. Prue: I have three very brief questions. Number one, does your party have an official policy adopted at convention on this, and if so, what is it?

Mr. Newman: As a party, we haven't adopted a particular form of PR that we would recommend, for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that if all of us went into a room and tried to decide on the best form of PR, you probably wouldn't see us for the next five or 10 years. It's a difficult decision that a group of people would find it difficult to decide on. Also, again, we have too much invested in the process. Personally, I'd love to see MMP, because I have the most likelihood of being elected. But as a party we see that, and so we choose to not recommend any one form of PR over another.

Mr. Prue: OK. The second one is, what kind of time frame would you recommend—that it be in place for the next election or the one after that? We've had various views on how fast to do this.

Mr. Newman: I had a conversation with John Hollins, the Chief Election Officer, earlier. You heard from him yesterday. I understood from him that he said the actual work to set up a particular voting system would not take that long. Most of his work is: Do the ballots get there? Can people do it in privacy? Do they have the locations available? The only real work for him is the education of who has to count the ballots. So we believe it's entirely possible to have 2007 be an election that's under some form of PR; if there's going to be a referendum, having it even early in 2007. That's enough time to have the citizens' assembly take place in 2006 and have a referendum in 2007, because, as Mr. Hollins said to me, it would not take him more than two or three months to set up PR for a general election.

Mr. Prue: Which leads me to my last question—with your permission, Chair, because they're all short. We have heard from some of the experts that part of the reason that BC failed is that they simply put one question before the electorate and that it wasn't abundantly clear what was happening. They contrasted that to New Zealand, which in fact held two votes, the first one saying, "Do you favour a change in the system, and if so, which of the following three or four options do you like best?" and then, taking that result, building upon the system and having it ready with all of the legislation ready, "Do you vote for this, yes or no?" so that

everybody knew what it was. Do you recommend one vote or two?

Mr. Newman: We're actually having our AGM in October this year and one of the policies we hope to see ratified there is that there be two votes, but that they be on the same date. So we can have question 1, "Do you think we should move away from the current first-past-the-post system, yes or no?" and question 2 would be, "If you voted yes to the first question, which of the following do you prefer as a system of voting?" We think the citizens' assembly can do the work at the same time to look at what they think about first-past-the-post and make their recommendations known to the people of Ontario, and then look at other forms of PR and recommend two or three that they think might work in its place.

You're right. Because of the unclear answer in BC—what did that no mean? Did it mean no to the current one or no to the recommended, or was it just unclear? We'd like to see that there be two questions but that they happen at the same time.

Mr. Prue: I don't think you understood how New Zealand did it. They asked for the three options and then they took the option that was successful and then they developed it and did the legislation and all the work and told people precisely how it would be implemented, and then asked, "Are you in favour, yes or no?" So it wasn't just, "Which of the three systems do you like?" at the same time. So that's what I'm asking, and it would take a couple of years to do that.

Mr. Newman: It might, and that's why I'm recommending we go to the one I spoke about.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): Thank you, Rob, for your presentation today. My question is to do with—actually, he stole one of my questions—the referendum. The Green Party around the world has elected members under mixed-member proportional systems in particular, and in many cases the Green Party elects members from the list portion of that. Some of the experts yesterday were talking about conflicts between the constituent-elected members and the list-elected members. I just wondered, with your experience in your party, if you had any comments on that situation.

Mr. Newman: Again, the Green Party of Ontario recommends no particular voting system; we just recommend that citizens be given the opportunity to choose. So I'll just speak personally. I'm the issue advocate for democratic renewal. I've spent some time talking about these things.

I personally prefer a system of MMP, which requires people to go out there and actually speak to constituents and receive votes. So of all the different kinds of lists, again, I personally prefer what's called the best-loser system, where anybody who runs in an election but doesn't win is then ranked in terms of the votes they received, and they're pulled off the list in that order. Again, that's a personal preference.

One of the things that I think that gives when you have people in the Legislature, some of whom represent constituents and some of whom represent all of Ontario, is

that that pool of people who represent all of Ontario is where you take your ministers from. I don't know if any of you have had the experience of being ministers and for how long, but it's a tremendous amount of work. Often-times I wonder how well the constituents are served. So I think that—

Mr. Patten: More staff.

Mr. Newman: Yes, more staff is right. That's one answer.

I just think the pool that comes from a list is a great source for ministers, because they represent what was required for the Legislature to represent the popular vote in the province.

Mr. Miller: What about conflicts between the two tiers of representatives? We did hear from some people yesterday saying there have been conflicts with constituents taking concerns to the list MPs.

Mr. Newman: I think if we educate people properly so that they remember easily—we're not taking away someone's constituent; we're adding to the representation they have. So there's an additional pan-provincial representation. Some of these people from a list may live in a certain riding, and they in fact may be someone from a party other than the one elected in that riding. It would be nice to see some greater teamwork among two politicians in the same riding. That would actually be added. I think if it's set out clearly that the ministers and the parliamentary assistants come from these list seats, that could be a good way to separate out what could be confusion.

The Chair: On that, I just have a question. If you're saying that cabinet ministers should be elected in the best-loser scenario, if you want, that list, in actual fact, then, you'd be making up a cabinet of all of the members who have lost. That's sort of the gist I get. I'm just asking the question.

Mr. Newman: Absolutely. This is one of the misconceptions that first-past-the-post gives us. I mean, if somebody got 45% of the vote and somebody else got 55% of the vote, I don't consider the person who got 45% really to be a loser. It's these conceptions about "I'm the winner and you're the loser" that I think are doing the greatest damage, not just in the Legislature but also in society at large. So these people are not losers.

The Chair: Thank you, and I have Ms. Smith next.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Just on that, if you're taking your best-loser approach, there's no concession there for regional representation. So if we looked at only those who came in second, it could be that the results would be that all those who came in second are from a particular region or a more heavily populated area, which would then allow you no regional representation in your cabinet at all in your scenario. I just wondered how you would address that.

Mr. Newman: Again, I'm not advocating this as a fully written solution. It was more of an idea, of a personal preference that I have. There are others who look into these things a lot deeper, and you heard from them yesterday. I'd be happy to come back with more on that.

But, you know, I have talked with people about that, and it may be that any kind of list that's composed that way is divided up based upon regions to make sure that there is regional representation. There are lots of factors that go into these things, absolutely.

Ms. Smith: Right. I was also interested in your discussion with Mr. Prue around doing the two referenda as one. You've said in a number of ways in your presentation that you think we should not be making this decision; the citizens should. I just question your kind of race to 2007, in that we've heard from some of the experts that the one shortfall in a number of the referenda or in a number of changes that have taken place has been the lack of education for the citizenry. So I'm wondering how you would—"justify" is probably too strong a word, but how you would relate your wish to get change in place quickly with your wish to ensure that that change reflects the wishes of the population, if in fact what the other experts are telling us is true, that is, that the population needs a great deal of education before we can implement any of these changes.

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Mr. Newman: That's a good question, and I'm glad you asked it. I think two kinds of education are required on these things. About half the people in this province vote right now, so we have a fair number of people who go to the polls on election day. They make a choice, and they know that choice is going to have an impact. I don't think a lot of them really know the exact process of how ballots are counted. Yes, we can all describe it very simply: They pull them out of the box and whoever has the biggest pile is the winner. Everyone here has probably had an experience of being a scrutineer, but a lot of people who vote don't, so they don't know the exact process—you know, the envelope comes here and then it's opened there—yet they still go and vote.

This is what I mean by education. It's not education on the nuances of the counting of every ballot in a system; it's education about—I'm sorry. I lost my thought.

Ms. Smith: We were talking about the need for education of the citizenry before we make changes. Maybe I can just ask you another question that will lead you back.

We all in this room, including Mr. Prue, have grown up in this system of whoever gets the most votes wins. That's the system we all know. If we're going to change that, that's a fundamental change in the way we do things in the province. I think it actually feeds into your discussion that only 50% of the people vote. If we're going to change the way we vote, we've got to not only re-educate 50% of the people who are voting and active, but we also have to re-engage the 50% who aren't. Personally, I think that is a huge undertaking and will take more time. So I just want to again put to you how you can—

Mr. Newman: That is somewhat helpful. That's a bigger picture of what it means by education. It's educating people about the impact their vote will have under a new system of voting. Yes, the process to count STV ballots is a complicated process, but as a voter I don't have to know every step in how the voting

happens; I just have to know how it's going to have an impact.

There have been many times when we've changed voting in Ontario, and in Canada, for that matter. There was a time when women couldn't vote. It took a great deal of education, or maybe a little bit of education, to teach women, "This is how you vote." But it was important, so we did it.

Honestly, do they have to know? "You go here, you give your card"—do you know what I mean? It's maybe a five-second thing, but there was a time when lots of people couldn't vote. People in prisons were not allowed to vote until five or 10 years ago. So the education about, "This is how you do it: You walk down the hall and you do this"—changing voting systems happens all the time and it requires education, absolutely. But I think the people of Ontario are up to it, and that's where I stand on it.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): Thank you, Rob. I appreciate hearing your comments. We've heard them before as well. Adequately resourcing the citizen-related process, both human resources or the financial and whatever role they may play in the education part—it will be a multiple-jurisdictional education process.

I'm particularly interested, though, in one thing, and I just want some clarity because I'm not quite sure if what I heard you say is exactly what you intended. I'm leading in, because there's a tendency to fall into this kind of commentary. You talked about having two votes at the same time. I think you said that the first question would be, "Do you want to have change, yes or no? If you answer yes, then which of the following would you opt for?" If in effect that's what you said, you would be disenfranchising all of those who said no from having the opportunity to comment on the options. I think we want to phrase the question, ultimately, as, "Do you want a change, yes or no?" and regardless of that, "Here are the options if there were a choice of change," so we ensure that everybody had a choice.

People fall into an easy comment, I think. I just want to clarify what your intention was. Was it that people who vote yes have an option to choose the options, or that everyone would have a choice on the options?

Mr. Newman: That's exactly it. That's why we're lucky to have a select committee in Ontario, a group of people focused on these things. That's more the intention, yes. That's the kind of input that I think you guys can offer, that the question would be more like what you said.

Mr. Arthurs: OK. All voters would have choices—both sides.

The Chair: Are there any other questions from the committee?

Thank you very much for your presentation. One of the comments that you made had to do with the scope of the work this committee is doing. Of course you know it was a motion that was ordered in the House. A very specific mandate was given to the committee by the Legislature, and that's one of the areas we have to focus

on. You gave some interesting comments and we really appreciate your taking the time to come before this committee. Thank you.

Mr. Newman: Thank you for having me.

CANADIAN TAXPAYERS FEDERATION

The Chair: I don't know if we have Ms. Kheiriddin here. Yes? I know we're running a little bit early, but if you're ready? OK. Tasha Kheiriddin is the provincial director of the Ontario division of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. We have your research assistant here as well?

Ms. Tasha Kheiriddin: She's actually not. She is heavily pregnant, so I said, "Stay in the office today." She wasn't feeling that well.

The Chair: The clerk is just passing out some information that you're providing, a submission.

Ms. Kheiriddin: I think pretty much everyone here is probably familiar with the CTF and what we do. One of the areas we focus on is electoral reform. We participated in the process in British Columbia, and the position we're going to advance is pretty similar to the one we did there, in fact, in terms of the recommended course of action or the way we feel strongly that Ontario should move. We have also added an additional element, something already present in British Columbia, which is recall legislation. I don't know if that is on the table right now—it does not seem to be—but we think it should be considered.

To get started, in the executive summary we outline our main recommendations. Essentially, we'd like to see the committee and obviously the citizens' assembly, who are the ultimate arbiters of what will take place in terms of change that will be presented to the citizens of Ontario—we'd like that, in considering the best voting system for Ontario, they strive to attain the following objectives: above all, better accountability in government. That implies the following elements: having less party discipline; a parliamentary check on the Premier and cabinet; a legislative role for MPPs, a true legislative role; a closer link between MPPs and voters; public policy driven, as much as possible, by the long-term interest rather than short-term partisan interest; fewer wasted votes, which is one of the problems we have with the current first-past-the-post system; better representation for everyone, including rural ridings; fewer swings in public policy; and greater accountability between elections.

The position we came to in British Columbia and the one we advocate here is that better accountability is best served through a mixed voting system and not first-past-the-post. In particular, we recommend a mixture of the single transferable vote, as is used in Ireland, and the alternative vote system, as is used in Australia. Both of these are time-tested and proven systems that use a preferential ballot. People vote for candidates and not political parties. STV we recommend to be used in urban ridings, whereas alternative voting, as I will explain, is more useful in rural ridings.

We also recommend a second item, which is the institution of recall legislation for MPPs. We understand there is a private member's bill before the government to this effect, but I will get into why we think it is an element that should be under consideration for the committee, or the citizens' assembly as well when it gets constituted. It's something we understand is not presently on the table.

Finally, I'd like just to make a point in terms of accountability. If the government is truly serious, it is our belief that the irony here is that we're going to be having a referendum on these proposed changes. This government has not really respected the requirement of a referendum in other legislation, and we would like to just make the point that, going forward, for there to be true democratic accountability, we would appreciate if the government would respect the referendum mandated by the taxpayer protection act in particular, and not act like its predecessor government, which was as much at fault on this in terms of amending that law, basically to get around it.

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In terms of lack of accountability, members of provincial Parliament are the custodians of the public purse, and they're also the custodians of the public trust. Taxpayers hand over money to the government on the expectation that politicians will spend it wisely and fulfill the commitments they make during elections. When these expectations aren't met, voters will feel cheated, and you get the start of an accountability gap growing between voters and their representatives. In Ontario, unfortunately, we don't have to look too far to find that kind of gap. In the 2003 election, Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty promised to uphold the province's Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. He promised to not run deficits and not raise taxes. And in his first budget, he essentially broke all those promises.

When asked what their number one priority was for 2004-05, 55% of CTF Ontario supporters said, "Holding Mr. McGuinty's government accountable for its pledge." We survey our supporters every year, and even we were surprised by this response. It was by far the highest response to any issue. The second-highest was calling for a reduction of waste, duplication and overlap, which is one of the core functions of the CTF's mandate. That got 8% support.

This accountability gap only widens when citizens feel that their votes really don't matter. In the first-past-the-post electoral system, we see a lot of wasted votes. It favours big parties over smaller parties and independent voices. All too often, voters don't cast their ballot in favour of a candidate or party; they'll cast it just so the other guy doesn't get in. The result is that the Legislature does not truly reflect the will of the people, and democracy is thwarted.

As an example, the current Liberal government received 46.5% of the popular vote, yet it holds 70% of the seats. The opposition Progressive Conservatives garnered 34.7% support, which translated into 23.3% of total seats. This

isn't new. For the last six elections, we have had these kinds of disparities. The only time there was a roughly equal percentage of popular vote to seats was in 1985. In the six elections since then, majority governments have been formed with, at the most, 47.3% for the Liberal Party in 1987, and, at the very least, 37.6%. That was the NDP back in 1990.

So what needs fixing? Essentially, among CTF supporting members there is a strong commitment for democratic reform, particularly electoral reform. People want to see a change in the voting system not just because it's a nice idea or for its own sake, but to make the government more accountable. That must be the overriding goal. Allocating legislative seats to parties based on the popular vote and giving voters more choice are both important, but what this committee's and the assembly's task is really about—what people really want in the end—is better government, government that's more responsive, less open to waste and mismanagement and abuse.

If the goal is greater accountability, the following, in our opinion, need fixing: the excessive amount of party discipline that MPPs are placed under, the complete domination of a Legislature in the end by the Premier and cabinet, and weak local representation.

It's interesting to examine other places where our system of parliamentary democracy is exercised, and particularly where we inherited it from, the British system. The uniqueness of our parliamentary democracy consists in allowing the Premier and cabinet to sit and vote in the Legislative Assembly. That, together with party discipline, gives modern-day Premiers control over the cabinet and assembly and renders Ontario's Legislative Assembly incapable of really providing what we consider an essential function, which is to place a check on the powers of the Premier and cabinet to protect the interests of citizens and taxpayers.

In the UK, it works differently. There are certain reminders we've had of how the British parliamentary system is actually supposed to work. Margaret Thatcher lost 22 bills, or legislative proposals as they are called there, on the floor of the House of Commons. That didn't cause an election. Ministers simply had to go back to the drawing board. More recently, Tony Blair's proposal to join the "coalition of the willing" was not supported by 137 of his own Labour MPs. This would never happen here. Our Parliament is chronically compliant, and every government measure, budget and bill simply passes. There's no parliamentary check on the powers of the Premier and cabinet. Essentially, between elections in a majority government, we are an elected dictatorship. Party discipline is designed to enhance the powers of Premiers, cabinets and political parties. When successful, essentially it robs the voters of direct representation. When your local MPP becomes party property the day after the election, as everyone does, you've lost your vote, your voice and your representative. Interests of parties essentially come before interests of citizens. Representation is sacrificed and accountability weakened.

This isn't to denigrate the role of the MPP or MPPs themselves, you guys. No. They are, if you get to the next page, public-spirited and hard-working. It's the system that is the problem and not the individuals within it. MPPs are ombudsmen and lobbyists for their constituents and communities. They lack, however, a role in direct law-making. Often, laws are actually made behind the scenes. They're drafted by bureaucracies. The average MPP does not have the input that we feel is necessary to really impact the legislation that goes through Parliament. Votes are often formalities. MPPs do excellent work, but their oversight function is not advanced, and by this we mean oversight of the operations of government and the public policy agenda for the province.

It should be noted that the current Liberal government has given its backbench a lot of work on legislative committees such as this one, and this is touted as empowering MPPs and giving them a voice in shaping the government's public policy agenda. What it does, though, in some ways is the opposite, because it co-opts MPPs into the government's agenda. Innovations like this have also been promised by Paul Martin at the federal level, and we haven't seen them strengthen parliamentary democracy there either, but more undermine parliamentary scrutiny of the government. They reduce the Legislative Assembly to a legislative committee of cabinet, complete the domination of the assembly by cabinet, and essentially give the boot to accountability.

So to make government more accountable, we'd like to go back to fundamentals. The most basic task of the Legislative Assembly is to run government wisely and protect citizens from government overspending, mismanagement and any arrogance that can lead to abuse of power.

The citizens' assembly on electoral reform will have a unique opportunity to restore more power to you, the people's representatives. It's the first time they will have a chance to do this. The citizens will actually make rules by which they will elect their representatives. This is incredibly significant, so we commend the government on this initiative. It's the first time that we've seen it in this province.

Politics, in the end, is about power, and those who have it will, generally speaking, do everything they can to keep it. The divisions of powers within the assembly need to be rebalanced to ensure they are in favour of the people's representatives.

We don't want to suggest that MPPs should at all times be in an adversarial position to the party that they represent, but they should have more freedom and more independence within the legislative process. We also feel that MPPs who serve in their ombudsman and lobbyist functions are usually more successful when they're a supportive member of the government.

Controls on the enormous and coercive powers of government are needed not when everything is great, when the economy is functioning well and everyone is happy, but when there is mismanagement and abuse, particularly when that's for partisan gain.

In the British parliamentary system, there is no control on government between elections except for Parliament itself. For such control to be possible when needed requires that MPPs have a measure of independence from party control. So in our view, if the citizens' assembly can, by a judicious choice of voting system, give MPPs more independence—give people more choice, but in the end also give the MPPs more independence from party control—this will be a very significant contribution to increasing democracy and accountability in the years to come.

What systems can be looked at? Our current voting system, generally speaking, has translated a minority of the popular vote into a majority of seats for one party. It's manufacturing parliamentary majorities. This is a feature which guarantees excessive powers for Premiers and cabinet. Any voting system that is more proportional, in our view, is a plus. It will make the Legislative Assembly more lively—although sometimes it's debatable whether it should be more lively—and less prone to be dominated by a party leader.

Under a more proportional voting system, no one party can stack standing committees, and Parliament would be a more deliberative body. While most proportional voting systems create the potential to give MPPs greater legislative function, not all of them are as well suited to different jurisdictions and have the same potential for lessening party discipline or strengthening local representation.

Systems like the mixed-member proportional systems which are in use in jurisdictions such as Germany, Scotland and New Zealand fill at least half their seats with MPPs elected from single-member ridings, while others are elected or chosen from at-large lists. While this increases proportionality, there is a concern that it also generally increases the size of your Legislature. As advocates for taxpayers, we do not want to see Legislatures expanding beyond the size they are now. That was the case in British Columbia. The limitation for the citizens' assembly there was to keep the size, and we think that is a good goal.

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While proportionality would be increased, the other problem is also that there would be a decrease in the level of local representation. This probably wouldn't be popular in Ontario either, because people here are attached to the idea that they have a local representative. The tradition of local democracy, or having a local MPP, is something we think people would find hard to give up.

So what we think would be a better solution would be the adoption of a combination of single transferable vote and alternative vote, mostly in multi-member districts, apart from rural ridings where, as we said, the alternative vote would be preferable, because you would elect one member. Expanding rural ridings by amalgamating them with others would create geographic areas that were too unwieldy, therefore we believe that some ridings should stay the way they are, with one representative, but that person should be chosen in a different way.

Ridings would be merged into larger districts that are assigned a number of MPPs based on population. In multi-member districts, voters will cast their ballot for the party of their choice, and depending on the percentage of votes per district, they're assigned a percentage of seats attached to the district. Ballots can also be designed to let voters rank favourite candidates instead of parties.

In the alternative vote system, candidates who win must obtain 50% plus one of the vote, and therefore there is only one winner in the end. If no candidate has an absolute majority on the count of the first preference on the ballots, the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is removed from the count. Their ballots are examined for the second choice, which are then assigned to the remaining candidates in the order as marked on the ballots. This process is then repeated until one candidate has an absolute majority and is declared elected.

In the single transferable vote system, a quota is calculated that sets the number of votes a candidate must attain to be elected in each district. The formula for that—maybe you're familiar with this—is the total number of votes cast divided by one more than the number of candidates to be elected, plus one vote. Votes are then counted according to first preferences, and any candidates who have achieved the quota are elected.

From the remaining candidates, to decide who is elected, votes are transferred from candidates who have more than the necessary number to achieve the quota and from the candidate with the least number of votes. This means that where the first preferences of voters were not able to be used to elect a candidate, their second choice becomes important. This process of transferring votes will continue until the required number of candidates have attained enough votes to be elected.

Overall, the CTF believes that STV/AV systems have the greatest potential to give MPPs a measure of independence from party control, are sufficient to check government when needed, and allow voices to be reflected in a more proportionate way in the Legislature, while ensuring that you still have local representation. You don't get complete proportional representation, that is true, but as I said, that's not the only goal. We believe that this presents a better system because it does preserve the local element.

STV/AV also, in multi-member ridings, allows voters to rank candidates of the same party as well as candidates of different parties, so it maximizes their choice. Competition is not just between candidates of different parties but also between candidates of the same one. For candidates, this creates a system where the nomination is only the first step. The real nomination, in fact, is for the people. Paid-up party members aren't the only ones who have a say in whether you can accede to government; voters do too. It's kind of like a US-style primary. As we know, party discipline in the United States is less severe than ours. That's an important factor that relates to their primary system. US candidates can't really even get to first base, so to speak, unless they are popular, not with the parties but with the voters. This ensures that US politics is focused on local electors.

Similarly, the logic of STV/AV ensures that voters are the most important determinants of who gets elected and abolishes, essentially, all safe seats. Every seat will be decided on election day, as opposed to in the backrooms, through nomination battles. All the stories that I'm sure we've heard of stacking things and that kind of thing are essentially not guaranteeing a seat, because you're not the only candidate from your party who will be running.

In addition, and most importantly, STV/AV permits independent candidates and those from smaller parties to get elected. Candidates whose appeal is limited to a local constituency can also get elected. MPPs who feel unduly pressured by their party have the option of appealing to voters directly. The possibility to win as an independent essentially neutralizes the ability of a Premier to withhold signing nomination papers. STV/AV, more than any other system, permits candidates to pay attention to the individual MPPs as much as to their party. The option of representing voters rather than a party, should such a choice be necessary, is an option that gives MPPs a measure of independence, should it be needed.

Accountability also requires, as we said, a law-making role for MPPs. To obtain a level of proportionality sufficient to give MPPs this voice basically requires that the total wasted vote does not exceed 20%. The wasted vote count is votes cast for candidates who don't win. In the current system, that's about 50%, in a typical first-past-the-post election. The third requirement to attain accountability is stronger local representation, and that is also an area where STV/AV shines.

To create multi-member ridings—if you think of Toronto, for example—you would amalgamate contiguous existing ridings. It's important to note that you don't want to create districts that are too big, for one thing, which is why we say that multi-member ridings should not be in rural areas. And within the multi-member ridings, each riding should retain sufficient numerical strength to elect their own MPP if voters are so minded. Unlike in the mixed-member proportional system, local representation will not be diluted through the STV/AV system.

To elect an MPP for an existing riding is not just possible but is highly likely. When parties field more than one candidate, such candidates will want to distinguish themselves from their running mates, so selecting different areas of the same multi-member riding is also another way that can carve out a local political market and ensure representation for those voters.

In addition, multi-member ridings give voters more than one local MPP, and more voters will be represented by an MPP of one's own political persuasion. In multi-member ridings, MPPs will compete to provide the best service to voters, citizens and taxpayers. This competition won't just be limited to elections but will be ongoing, between elections. This element of competition, which is essentially lacking in most systems, including our current one, will empower voters in new and surprising ways, we believe, and will make government more accountable to those who pay the bills.

Members of the citizens' assembly on electoral reform will not be representing political parties and political interests but will be representing the people's interest—that is the goal the government has set for them—so they must select a voting system that puts the people first and makes government more accountable. In terms of giving voters a more meaningful role in government and in terms of making government more accountable and responsible, we think there is definitely room for improvement.

When STV was put to the people in a referendum in British Columbia earlier this year, as you know, it garnered 57% of the vote, which was just shy of the 60% threshold set for its adoption. There is a criticism that the system is too complicated for voters to understand, and I heard the person presenting before me addressing that in some measure. We think (a) these criticisms are unfounded, if the system is properly explained, and (b), as long as the voters understand the intent of the system and how it will benefit them—they're not going to be sitting there counting the ballots. In fact, a computer is a much more efficient way of counting ballots in an STV system than is by hand. We also think it would encourage people to vote because under the system they would feel their vote really mattered and they would be able to vote for people as opposed to against candidates. So all candidates would have a chance to win and people would be more inclined to support candidates who otherwise would not have had a chance to win.

We also would like to see another element put before the citizens' assembly, and that is recall legislation, which already exists in British Columbia. We'd like to empower citizens to vote between elections as well as at election time. We think they should have the right to recall their MPPs if they are seriously in breach of promises or the public trust.

When we asked our supporters in our annual survey if they thought recall legislation was a good idea, 74% of them said yes, 4% said no and 22% were undecided.

British Columbia has this legislation, and it has not been abused. That's one of the criticisms that is sometimes made of it. In fact, one MLA was forced to resign in 1988, a Paul Reitsma, who had written phony letters to the editor praising himself. When this was exposed, citizens collected enough signatures to force an election. He quit before one could be held. In the United States, everyone is familiar with the recall of Governor Gray Davis in California in 2003, which resulted in a state election that replaced him with Governor Schwarzenegger.

This legislation is before the House today in the form of a private member's bill by Conservative MPP Jim Flaherty, but, as everyone is aware, under party discipline it's incredibly difficult to get a private member's bill passed unless you have all-party approval. It would seem even more difficult to get one passed that essentially would allow voters to fire you between elections. We understand that.

We think that recall legislation is a key part of democratic reform, however. Had there been recall legis-

lation, in particular, our organization would probably not have sued Mr. McGuinty over his breach of promise. Voters could have had their say if they were able to muster a challenge to this, and if they couldn't, then clearly the people would have spoken. The point is, people would have had the chance to speak. They were denied their right to express their opinion in the referendum that was never held, and they were denied the right to express their opinion because there's no form of recall legislation.

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As it stands now, it doesn't appear that recall legislation is before the citizens' assembly. We think that's a mistake. We think it makes the debate on electoral reform incomplete. Therefore, we believe it should be put to them as part of their deliberations and as part of any eventual referendum to Ontarians on the subject.

In conclusion, it's our hope that if the citizens' assembly recommends positive changes to the voting system and advocates recall laws as well, to hold politicians to account between elections, MPPs will be made so accountable that our organization would cease to exist. We'd have no reason. It would probably make a lot of you very happy.

Changing the voting system will not automatically and by itself resolve all the challenges that face our system of governance, but this much is sure: If Ontario leaves the voting system as it is, it will close the door to new possibilities, whereas STV/AV will open the door. Giving Ontario voters the right to recall MPPs between elections would further ensure that politicians are more accountable.

These choices are obviously before both you and, eventually, the citizens' assembly. We hope that the process goes smoothly, and we again commend you for engaging in it. I'm available for any questions. I see one already.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I have Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Arthurs: Tasha, thank you for the presentation. Obviously, I'm not going to agree with everything that's in here, but there are some core principles that would be hard to disagree with. Certainly, the matter of accountability generally is something we need to look at in this process.

I do have a very substantive concern, though, and you're going to have to help me clarify it if you can. Your presentation speaks to—I'm just going to flip through a couple of pages.

In the executive summary: "Improved accountability requires the following: ... less party discipline."

On page 3, under the heading "Party Discipline, the Legislature, Local Representation:"

"If the goal is greater accountability in government, the following needs fixing: the excessive amount of party discipline MPPs are placed under."

As I move to page 5 and I reference the bottom third of the page, "Another system would involve multi-member districts, using the single transferable vote or the alternative vote (STV/AV)." You said you would prefer to have STV in large urban centres as opposed to rural

areas, which would probably make up the vast majority of the population of the province of Ontario, give or take.

In the following paragraph, though, “In such systems, ridings are merged into larger districts that are then assigned a number of MPPs based on population. Voters cast their ballot for the party of their choice”—

Ms. Kheiriddin: That’s a typo. I’m sorry. It’s for the candidate of their choice.

Mr. Arthurs: That’s a substantive difference.

Ms. Kheiriddin: I’m sorry. You’re absolutely right.

Mr. Arthurs: —“and depending on the percentage of votes per district, parties are assigned a percentage of the seats.” I mean, this is stating a very, very strong case for STV as enhancing the party discipline, when the members are selected by the party or chosen from a list of party candidates. If you need to clarify that, either verbally or, if you’d like, subsequently in writing, it would certainly help me in understanding the positions. I see this as very contradictory.

Ms. Kheiriddin: I’m sorry. Actually, there are different ways of approaching STV and ranking candidates within parties, as opposed to ranking parties. You can do it the other way. We prefer ranking candidates. It’s not a typographical error, because obviously “party” and “candidate” are different words, but in rereading that sentence, I agree it is confusing. I will clarify that.

What we would like to see in an STV system is that you rank the candidates. That is, when you get a ballot, even if you have 20 candidates, you put your preference in order, 1 through 20. Then obviously, the candidates who have the highest votes, if they accede immediately, they accede to the seats that are available, and if not, you reassign their votes by percentage.

Mr. Arthurs: So these are not independent candidates. These are candidates potentially selected on a party list, and then you select from the party list.

Ms. Kheiriddin: There’s that way of doing it, and there’s the other way, which we prefer, which is by candidates, independent of party. So you have candidates running against each other, which is what I said earlier.

I’ll clarify that in writing. I know what happened here, actually. In putting together this report, there were some aspects of the report in British Columbia that we drew upon, and I think that was one of the ones that was not clearly transposed from the two. I apologize for that.

Mr. Arthurs: If you can do that, it will certainly help me understand what you’re trying to achieve.

Ms. Kheiriddin: That’s fine. I will.

Mr. Prue: I have a couple of questions. The first one is the recall mechanism, and I’m kind of intrigued. Mr. Barrett in the last Legislature tried to put this through, and even his own party voted against it because the experience in BC, although one person did quit, is that it’s been tried six or seven times, every single time it has cost in the millions of dollars, and every single time it has failed.

Ms. Kheiriddin: So you’re saying it’s too expensive? Why are we—

Mr. Prue: I’m just wondering in terms of a group like yours that tries to save so much money going after a system that is so inept that it never works, except that one guy quit rather than face it, and he probably would have won if he had stayed. I just don’t understand.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Well, there’s a threshold. You can set different thresholds. The BC threshold—you’re probably familiar with it—is 40%; you have six months to garner 40%. The bill before the Legislature here is lower; it’s 25%. Obviously, that’s an easier threshold or test to meet. We applaud the principle. In terms of, “Can it be done better to ensure that taxpayers’ money isn’t wasted?” of course it can. We think it should be looked at, though. The citizens’ assembly doesn’t even have it on their table right now.

Democracy is expensive. We won’t deny that we put taxpayers’ interests first and we believe that that, generally speaking, is paramount. But there are certain things that you cannot put a price on, and that is accountability in democracy. So in some cases it may be that you’ll have an attempt at recall that will cost money and that will not go to the intended effect. But it gives people an outlet as well for their democratic participation. I could show you the e-mails and phone calls we had after the 2004 budget from people who were furious that they had no recourse.

Mr. Prue: I’m not surprised at that.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Lawsuits are expensive too.

Mr. Prue: All right. Yes, lawsuits are expensive. Everything is expensive.

The second one, I’m a little perplexed at. I understand your rationale, but I am very reluctant myself; I’ll not be making the recommendation to have two voting systems in Ontario, that people in rural and northern areas vote one way and have one system, and people in Toronto, Ottawa or Hamilton have a different system. I will tell you right now, that is fraught with difficulties, because it’s difficult enough now, where you have northern ridings with 75,000 people versus urban ridings with 120,000, trying to justify that, and the space is all that justifies it, without getting into a completely different voting system. Can you not see your way clear to advocate either one or the other?

Ms. Kheiriddin: We prefer STV, but the problem with STV in rural ridings is that to have a multi-member district—that’s what STV is—you would have territories that are so huge it would be impossible, unfeasible, to even campaign in them. We think preferential ballots are an improvement over the current system. Alternative voting has preferential ballots. It’s not as good as STV, if you will, but it still allows people to rank candidates in the order of their choice, and that is why this was recommended in British Columbia as well. In the end, they decided to go with STV there, BC STV, as they call it. I understand what you’re saying—you don’t want to have two systems—but STV would not serve rural ridings well, and that’s why we can’t recommend it for jurisdictions that are so geographically expansive.

Mr. Prue: If it doesn’t work across the whole province, why haven’t you looked at MMP?

Ms. Kheiriddin: As I said, we don't think MMP would deliver the same kind of local representation, because there you pick half your candidates or a percentage of them from riding-specific candidates, and the others are picked from an ad hoc list. Odds are that urban ridings would probably dominate in that case. Urban ridings dominate politically anyway. They dominate in cabinet. They dominate. So the likelihood of their dominating, especially if the party has the choice, choosing from a list—it might be different if people do, but again, it's much more likely that someone can be well known as a candidate in an urban centre as opposed to well known enough in rural ridings to get him on that list.

Mr. Prue: Isn't that why you'd do MMP regionally, then?

Ms. Kheiriddin: You could examine it regionally, but again, we still felt that single transferable vote was preferable when we looked at it.

Put it this way: Either one is an improvement over the current system; however, if we had to choose between them, we would choose STV/AV.

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Mr. Prue: OK, thank you.

The Chair: I have Ms. Smith and then Mr. Sterling.

Ms. Smith: Just following up on Mr. Prue's comments, if you're looking at two different systems and you want to engage your citizenry and you want your citizens to feel like they have a level of participation—we've heard a lot about the education of our citizenry in order to participate in the electoral system. I think that introducing two systems across the province would be unmanageable and untenable.

Ms. Kheiriddin: From the voters' perspective, they're not particularly different, because you're ranking. The difference is you're not going to be choosing five representatives for your riding; you'll be choosing one. So essentially, you'll be getting a ballot with, let's say, 20 names on it and you'd be ranking them in order. The difference is that in an urban riding, let's say, where you have—I'm just guessing. Say downtown Toronto would be amalgamated together. You would choose five representatives from that pool, so there you need STV to rank them. Alternative voting only produces one winner, so if you have a rural riding where there's only one representative because by population that's what's warranted, you wouldn't use STV there in the other way; alternative voting is just easier, so you would just be ranking the people in order of your preference, and the top one would win.

Ms. Smith: So you would make no concessions for the sparse population of the north. You would feel that we need representation based on population no matter where you are in the province.

Ms. Kheiriddin: You'd have to look at all factors, but population obviously is a factor. The point is that in STV you amalgamate ridings to create districts, and if you do that in the north, it would just be enormous. It's the geographic limitations. That's why we're saying to keep some of the ridings the same as they are, or if the

assembly finds it needs to be rejigged, fine, but essentially you would still probably have one representative for those ridings, as opposed to having five. It wouldn't make sense. You'd be increasing the number of representatives in the Legislature then, which again goes against the interests of keeping democracy as inexpensive as possible.

Ms. Smith: I don't quite follow how that would be fair, but OK.

Maybe you could tell us a little bit about the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. How is your organization funded and what is your membership made up of?

Ms. Kheiriddin: Our membership is made up of 65,000 supporters across the country. Approximately 10% of those are in Ontario. We've been active here for two and a half years now as an organization. We get volunteer donations. Generally speaking, we are supported by individuals, small businesses, farmers. That's sort of a typical profile of someone who is a member.

Ms. Smith: Of the 6,500 people that you represent in Ontario, 10% of 65,000, and you say that you survey them often, what is the demographic breakdown of that membership?

Ms. Kheiriddin: You're asking—

Ms. Smith: Male, female, age.

Ms. Kheiriddin: I can get you that information. I don't have it on me. We do break that down, so I'd be happy to send you that. I don't know off the top of my head.

Ms. Smith: Thank you.

Mr. Sterling: I'd just like some clarification. As I understand your proposal, it is a combined proposal. One of the things I'd like to know is, is there any other sort of jurisdiction in the world that has different voting systems for different areas of their jurisdiction? As I understand it, if I can compare it to eastern Ontario—and I represent the riding of Lanark—Carleton, so I represent Lanark county and the west part of the city of Ottawa. In the new scheme of things as you would propose, all of Ottawa, which now has five or six members—Richard? About that?

Mr. Patten: Seven, actually.

Mr. Sterling: Well, I'm sort of half and half, you know. But let's say there were seven members in Ottawa. You would remove all of those single constituencies and you would say, "We're going to elect instead, under the STV system, seven members as all of Ottawa would choose."

Ms. Kheiriddin: Right.

Mr. Sterling: So each person in the city of Ottawa would pick seven people off of their STV vote. How does this address the proportionality problem? You would still have the wonks in that the number of people who would eventually sit in the Legislature would not match up with the percentage vote which they in fact received. For all the other proposals, when we have talked about proportional systems, the ultimate goal, or one of the principal goals, has been to try to match the number of seats somewhat akin to the percentage of the vote they receive.

Ms. Kheiriddin: It is not as proportional as MMP; however, it is more proportional where it's been tried or has been used. What you have is people's second and other choices essentially playing into the factor. So it may not be proportional to everyone's first choice but it is proportional in terms of the total number of choices made, the rankings made.

Mr. Sterling: I don't see your solution, other than perhaps the AV portion of it, as being that much of an improvement over what we have or different from what we have, other than you make it very expensive for everybody who is running in the city of Ottawa for one of those positions. If I'm running as a candidate on that list, I've got to try to appeal to 800,000 or 900,000 people as opposed to 100,000 people in my own geographic riding.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Generally speaking, what tends to happen under STV is that candidates will focus, as I mentioned earlier, on parts of ridings. They may not campaign in the entire riding. They may have a base in part of that riding, so people do get, for lack of better words, a local representative, but they get a representative who may also be from their particular area. What it does do, though, is that as a whole, you would be more likely to have representation from all parties from the riding per se, because if you have seven candidates elected in Ottawa, there's a chance you'll have—under this system, you have a Conservative, a Liberal and an NDP elected. So you if you're living in Ottawa, you're more likely to have a representative of the party that you supported being in government. It won't be the only representative you have, but you will have someone who will be there who represents the viewpoint that you have.

Mr. Sterling: But here's another problem: In Ottawa, I think about 35% are francophone and 65% are anglophone, and I would imagine in communities across Toronto, in particular, you would have the Portuguese community down near College Street and you would have another group in another area of Toronto. It seems to me that whatever group, whatever their links would be in terms of their culture or their language or other influencing factors, would elect all the people, and the minority that now has, through smaller districts, the opportunity to perhaps elect somebody who represents their interest wouldn't have that right.

Ms. Kheiriddin: If you're worried about ethnic voting blocs, currently in Canada there are 20 ridings where immigrant voters make up close to or more than 50% of the population. They're concentrated in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. In British Columbia, I believe they discussed this issue as well, because Vancouver obviously has many different kinds of cultural communities. I don't think that was a stumbling block for the citizens' assembly there to choose STV.

Mr. Sterling: No, but their STV is very different from your STV. Their STV was a top-up. Your STV is going down to the core representative or the geographic representative; it's very, very different. That's very misleading.

Ms. Kheiriddin: OK. If your concern is for the fact there would be ethnic voting blocs, as I said, you can

have that concern under our current system as well, in that in certain communities there is a percentage of the population that would vote for someone from their religion or culture or whatever.

Mr. Sterling: I'm saying they wouldn't have that opportunity under what you're proposing. Under what we have now, if you have a riding of an average of 106,000 people and you have 50% or 60% of one cultural group and they nominate a candidate or all three candidates or all four candidates from different parties, they have the opportunity of electing those particular candidates. If you throw them in with a larger group, their voting power diminishes; from electing one, they will elect none.

Ms. Kheiriddin: You're assuming that that candidate wouldn't be acceptable to other people. I personally don't think that ethnic bloc voting is a good phenomenon. I think that people should be elected on their merits and appeal to everyone.

Mr. Sterling: Everybody agrees with that, but that's not the way things sometimes happen.

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Ms. Wynne: I want to go back to the question about the two systems. Did you talk about the definition of urban and rural? I thought this might have actually been where Mr. Sterling was going in terms of ridings that are mixed. Can you talk about how that would work, and whether you think there would be easy consensus on what's rural and what's urban?

Ms. Kheiriddin: That would be something else for the citizens' assembly to explore. Easy consensus—I can't answer that. There's rarely easy consensus on anything, but I think that you can draw up parameters.

Ms. Wynne: Can you talk about what those might be?

Ms. Kheiriddin: I think geography is one issue. Without getting into specifics, I think that a riding like Rainy River, for example, which is huge, would be very different from a riding like Beaches.

Ms. Wynne: Yes, but those are clear distinctions. I'm talking about the ridings that are not clear, that are mixed in terms of people, in terms of geography, in terms of—

Ms. Kheiriddin: Type of community.

Ms. Wynne: Absolutely. Where do you draw those lines? I see a huge problem with the education of the population in terms of two voting systems, and I don't understand how that would work. But more fundamentally than that, I know how much discussion there is in this province about rural and urban, and I guess I just don't quite understand how we would come to a consensus as a province about who should have which voting system.

Ms. Kheiriddin: That's a fair comment. In terms of defining features, I think two of the main defining features, geography and population, not so much necessarily distributed, i.e. if you have one city—but see, that again wouldn't happen. The reason that we have large ridings is because of geography and population being more dispersed than they would be in concentrated, urban ridings. I wish I could give a better answer to your question in terms of how—

Ms. Wynne: Are there academic references that you've made here? I guess I'm just interested in what your conclusions are based on.

Ms. Kheiriddin: They're based on research which was done mostly—I guess the legwork in terms of defining what types of systems were out there was done in the British Columbia process and then was examined in light of Ontario, in light of concerns here; the percentages, for example, of seats versus votes in the last six elections, those kinds of factors in terms of determining what we thought would work best.

Ms. Wynne: OK. So the references to where—

Ms. Kheiriddin: There aren't references in there. I can provide you references, if you want.

Ms. Wynne: OK, thanks. Yes.

Mr. Miller: Thank you, Tasha, for your presentation. It certainly stimulated some discussion. I guess, first of all—I think someone already asked this—are there other jurisdictions where they have two systems? Your alternate vote system, if I understand it correctly, it's like Australia uses in elections—

Ms. Kheiriddin: Certain parts.

Mr. Miller: —to their provincial Legislature, whatever that's called.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Right. I was going to say that they have this in certain areas. In Canada, actually, we used to have—I believe either Alberta or Manitoba, I can't remember exactly which, had the STV system for a period of time and then it was abolished. So it does coexist in certain places.

Mr. Miller: There seemed to be the most questions about your multi-member districts, your STV part for the urban areas. What if you used just the AV system for the whole province, maintaining individual geographic districts?

Ms. Kheiriddin: I think that one of the criticisms—

Mr. Miller: Just to be clear, that would mean that each candidate has to get 50% of the vote. Voters would rank the candidates and there would be an instant runoff, so that I have to win 50% in my geographic area to be elected.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Right. It's less likely to produce the proportionality that you would look for in terms of also electing independents, electing candidates who are from smaller parties or completely independent. So that is one of the reasons that AV is not our first choice in that respect.

Mr. Miller: Would AV be an improvement over the system we have, if we had a choice between the system we have now and AV, using geographic districts around the province?

Ms. Kheiriddin: We do think it's an improvement. Like I said, we think any type of preferential ballot or the move to proportional representation is an improvement over the current system. If we had to choose a specific type of system, we'd recommend this one.

Mr. Miller: In the multi-member districts, if I want to be a candidate, I'm a little curious about the role the

party plays in that. If there is a list, how do I get nominated to be within that district?

Ms. Kheiriddin: A party can obviously set the rules it wants. Right now, nomination papers have to be signed and there is just one candidate who accedes to nomination. In this sort of system, you could have a process whereby three candidates accede to run in that area. If you don't accede to run, you can always run as an independent too; there is always that option. Under the STV, there is a more likely chance that you might actually win than if you ran against the established party for which you had not won the nomination. A party can set its own rules in terms of how many candidates it would field.

Mr. Miller: So in the Ottawa district that we were talking about before, the PC Party wouldn't have a set number of candidates they would run or could run?

Ms. Kheiriddin: They could run a set number of candidates if they wanted to limit it to that, but essentially, if they run more candidates than there are seats, they're going to be running against each other. Like I said, someone who doesn't win the nomination for their party can run as an independent and, under this system, is more likely to be one of the people elected.

Mr. Miller: What sort of government do you see being elected by the system you're proposing? It's fairly clear to me from the last day that if we had an MMP system, we would have a coalition government. That's fairly obvious.

Ms. Kheiriddin: Coalitions are more likely. That is the same kind of thing. You're more likely to produce a coalition—not necessarily a minority government, but a coalition government.

Mr. Miller: What do you see as the benefits of that versus the system we have?

Ms. Kheiriddin: The benefit obviously is that people get the representation that they actually seek, that they actually want, as opposed to—

Mr. Miller: Speaking specifically to your organization, obviously one of its main concerns is tax dollars and how they're spent and not having an increase in taxes. A minority government is not a coalition government, but federally we're seeing a minority government where you could say that one of the results of it has been an extra \$5 billion added on to the proposed budget. Is that not a concern of yours in the coalition?

Ms. Kheiriddin: That is a concern. There is actually research that says you might end up spending more money if you have a coalition—actually, a minority government is the research that was done—but that doesn't take into account other factors within societies in just comparing and saying, "Because you have this kind of system, you will spend more of your GDP." It's debatable whether that actually happens. We feel that there would be more of a check in terms of individual members who would be able to vote either their conscience or their concerns. They would not be constrained by party discipline. We think more democracy is better. Again, it goes to the question of, "Is it costlier?" Well,

people would be making the choices that they actually want to make through their representatives, because, as representatives, you would be the ones that they really wanted to see there.

Mr. Miller: Do you not think that individual members would be under pressure from organized groups that might have one specific cause, or more so, under the system you are proposing?

Ms. Kheiriddin: I think governments are always under pressure from organized groups, whether they have more discipline or less. That is a fact of life, that there will be pressures, but we think—

Mr. Miller: In many cases it's a group that wants the government to spend more money on something, and there's usually a worthwhile cause that there's a need for, but—

Ms. Kheiriddin: Like I said, those pressures always exist, but we feel that if you are empowering the MPPs more, there will be a greater accountability to the people who elect them.

Also, there will be greater voter participation because people will feel that their vote actually matters. We're an incredibly politically disenfranchised society right now. People don't vote because they don't think that it will make a difference. That is extremely dangerous, because then you will have a small group of people making decisions that may not be in taxpayers' or other people's best interests. We would like to see a more democratically involved process and a more democratically involved citizenry.

There is always a risk that people will spend more money; possibly they'll spend less. You can't predict that scientifically.

The Chair: I have another member who wants to ask a question, and I also have a couple of questions, just very quick clarifications, if I might.

It took me a little bit of time to understand because you don't have references as to some of the comments in your paper there, but I understand that from the 1930s to the 1950s, this mixed AV was in the rural and STV was in the urban part of the western provinces. We have some research information that was provided to the members as well and is available.

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The Canadian Journal of Political Science in September 2004 commented on—actually, the title is “The Political Consequences of the Alternative Vote: Lessons from Western Canada.” When you talk about fairness and the whole notion of better democracy, “proportionality” is one of those words that also is equated to fairness, to more fairness of percentage of vote and those who are elected. In one of the comments there it states, “Whatever the merits of the alternative vote as an electoral system, improved proportionality of outcomes is not one of them.”

As I said, it just took us a few minutes, but I didn't know if that's where your references for this AV come from, the 1930s to the 1950s.

Ms. Kheiriddin: That's where it was practised in tandem, if you will, but in Ireland and in Malta the

proportionality, as I said, is not as exact, but it's closer than what we have now. It's not perfect, though.

The Chair: One other clarification. You made a statement that the day after a member is elected, they become party property. I think that's what you stated. Is that correct?

Ms. Kheiriddin: Well, I think the point I was trying to make is that, especially if you're in government and in caucus, you have to respect party discipline. You are less free to say things than when you were on the campaign trail. People say all sorts of things in elections, as we know. Then, especially if they accede to government, it's “toe the party line”; that kind of freedom, generally speaking, disappears. The choice of words maybe was a bit harsh, but essentially that is what happens. It's a fact of life in our parliamentary system. It's not the person's fault, and, like I said, we don't want to say that MPPs don't do the best job they can.

The Chair: It's the choice of words, “party property,” that I found a bit extreme.

Ms. Kheiriddin: All right.

The Chair: The other aspect, and I don't know if you're aware of it, is that certainly there are members here in this committee who are private members who sit on Management Board of Cabinet, who chair cabinet committee and who are also involved in this. Do you believe that's part of a better role for private members, if they are in these decision-making areas?

Ms. Kheiriddin: Again it comes down to the question, does that essentially make them more likely to adopt the general party line or to buy into the party? Of course it does. We're not saying we don't want MPPs to be involved, but at the same time, like I said, because of the party discipline rules, essentially you don't really have a choice. If the bill comes before you and you defeat your own government—I mean, you would never do that. What happened with Tony Blair, for example, or under Thatcher would not happen here.

The Chair: Just quickly, one other comment. How many members do you think this Legislature should have? You talked about more than one local MPP, about better service to the constituents. I think you used those words. I'm curious about how many members you think this Legislature should have.

Ms. Kheiriddin: We think it should have approximately the number that it currently does, but allocated differently. As I was saying, if you do straight proportional, or mixed, you end up with either two Houses or two lists, and too many people.

The Chair: Thank you. I have Dr. Kular.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): My question is, what do you think of the voter turnout? Would the system you are proposing make a difference to voter turnout? What difference would it make?

Ms. Kheiriddin: The main difference, like I said, is that we think it would empower both the voter and the MPP, but it would empower the voter to actually vote for independents, for smaller parties, for people they may

believe in, as opposed to voting necessarily against a party that they want to kick out of office or simply because they think they want to keep someone else out of office. It's a more positive versus a negative type of democracy, because there would be a greater chance for these people to actually be elected.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

FAIR VOTE ONTARIO

The Chair: We now have before us Fair Vote Ontario and Dr. Joseph Murray. Welcome, and thank you for being here today.

Dr. Joseph Murray: Thank you. We'll just set up for a moment.

I believe there are some folders which are filled with a lot of printed material. Today we're going to be doing more of a spoken presentation, and we'll refer you to various documents that are being circulated as we go along. The main document that I'd like to point out to everyone is the copy of the presentation. We'll be going through that set of slides.

I'd like to introduce the other people who are here with me. Wayne Smith is the president of Fair Vote Canada and the past chair of Fair Vote Ontario, and here beside me is June Macdonald, chair of Women for Fair Voting, which is part of both Fair Vote Canada and Fair Vote Ontario.

Today our agenda is to give a little bit of background on Fair Vote Ontario, and then our current situation. Wayne will be looking after that. Following that, we'll look at fair voting principles and models. Wayne will be taking the first two points, and then we're going to spend quite a bit of time on fair voting principles and models. June will be leading us through what we consider to be five important fair voting principles, reviewing some models and how we have evaluated them elsewhere. Then I'll be looking at how we balance these principles, because there's no perfect voting system, in terms of meeting every objective we can think of and making some comments on various sorts of unfair alternatives that we are opposed to, and then some conclusions.

I'll turn it over to Wayne.

Mr. Wayne Smith: Thank you very much, Joe, and good afternoon everyone. First of all, on behalf of Fair Vote Canada I'd like to express our thanks to the committee for giving us the opportunity to speak to you today about bringing fair voting to Ontario.

Fair Vote Canada is a national citizens' movement. We're membership-based and we are democratically governed. We have a very narrow focus. We want to make one very specific, very concrete change to the way we do politics in Canada: We want to change the voting system. The purpose of Fair Vote Canada is to gain broad, multi-partisan support for an independent, citizen-driven process to allow Canadians to choose a fair voting system based on the principles that all voters are equal and that every vote must count.

We call ourselves a multi-partisan organization, rather than non-partisan, because most of our members are

engaged in politics and in political parties. We have members and supporters from every political party in Canada, the ones who elect members to Parliament and the ones who don't. We also have members who are fed up with the overly partisan nature of our politics.

As individuals, we have all sorts of opinions about all sorts of things, like fixed election dates, campaign finance reform and compulsory voting. We don't necessarily agree about all those things but we do agree on one thing: We need a new voting system, because the one we have doesn't work. This is the core of our message for you here today. Contrary to what Mr. Campbell said in the Globe and Mail this morning, our system is broke and we do need to fix it.

Our system doesn't work, in the very simple sense that we do not get the government we vote for. Under our current system, we elect just one member in each riding. The candidate who gets the most votes wins the riding. Sometimes that candidate gets 60% or 70% of the votes; sometimes they get 30%. On average, winning candidates in Ontario and in federal elections get about 40% or 50% of the votes cast in their riding. That means that 50% to 60% of us—most of us—usually vote for people who do not get elected. So what do we get for our vote? We get a representative who does not represent us and we get a government that most of us did not vote for. Typically, one party gets 40% to 45% of the votes, which, because of the winner-take-all nature of our system, usually gives them about 55% to 60% of the seats in the Legislature, and that gives them 100% of the power.

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Among the background documents we've brought for you today is our Dubious Democracy Report for Ontario. It's a study of Ontario elections between 1980 and 2003 and is full of ordinary horror stories about the kinds of distorted outcomes that are routinely generated by our current single-member plurality system. Every election brings a fresh crop of horror stories. How can we have accountable government when we don't get the government we vote for?

Politics has changed in the last 200 years in Canada but our voting system has not. The modern political party, as a machine to elect people, came into existence around the beginning of the 20th century, not coincidentally at the same time that the proportional voting systems were developed and became popular. During the last 50 years, since the advent of television, politics has become less and less about individual members of Parliament and more and more about political parties and about party leaders. We know that the largest group of Canadians makes their voting decision on the basis of which party they want to form the government. The next-largest group of Canadians votes on the basis of which leader we want to be the Premier or the Prime Minister, but we don't get to vote for a party under our system and we don't get to vote for a leader.

Today it's more and more important to hold political parties accountable to the voters, but we're stuck with a system that allows us to vote only for our local member.

Our current system does not give us accountability, even at the local level. Most of us live in ridings that are safe for one party or another. Most of us know before the votes are cast who will win in our riding. Most of us have no real choices when we go into the polling booth. Most of us cast votes that do not make a difference to the outcome of the election. Where is the accountability?

We believe that the voting system belongs to the people. We believe that citizens will make the best decisions about what is good for citizens. We believe, with the greatest respect, that politicians, no matter how well-intentioned, will ultimately do what is good for politicians. That is why Fair Vote Canada has always called for a process of public education and consultation and an independent, citizen-driven process leading to a binding referendum, so that the people of Canada can choose the best voting system for Canada and so that the people of Ontario can choose the best voting system for Ontario.

Fair Vote Canada was originally formed to effect change at the federal level, and that is still our primary focus. However, the situation has evolved in a typically Canadian way. The provinces have moved ahead of the federal government on voting reform. We now have five provinces engaged the process of changing their voting system. That's half. We also have a federal voting reform process underway. The Prime Minister has indicated that what happens in the provinces will likely serve as the model for voting reform at the federal level. Accordingly, in October 2002, at a press conference in this building, we unveiled the Fair Vote Ontario campaign to change the voting system in Ontario.

One of the first things we did was to develop a petition calling upon all the political parties in Ontario to (1) initiate a public consultation to study the current Ontario system of voting and to study and to recommend some alternative voting systems, especially ones offering more proportional representation, and (2) once the consultative process has been satisfactorily completed, provide the people of Ontario with a referendum process to choose the best voting system for Ontario. We then got 100 prominent Ontarians to endorse this petition. The list of these 100 prominent Ontarians is also included in the background package we've brought for you today. I know you'll see some familiar names on that list. You'll see that they're from all backgrounds and from all political persuasions.

We have asked for an independent, citizen-driven process. We've been promised such a process in Ontario. We've been promised a citizens' assembly with the means and the authority to study alternative voting systems, develop recommendations for a new voting system and put those recommendations before the people of Ontario in a binding referendum. We commend the government of Ontario for showing the courage and leadership to entrust this decision to ordinary citizens. We encourage the parties of the opposition to work together with the government to assist and enable the citizens' assembly to do its work in a thorough and impartial way to ensure that the process is fair and free from interference. We'll be watching to make sure that it is.

We believe that a good process will yield a good outcome. We believe that citizens are capable of making these decisions. We believe that the citizens' assembly process will be effective, to the extent that it is seen to be fair, independent and impartial.

In conclusion, I'd like to emphasize that fair voting reform is not about what's good for this party or what's good for that party or, indeed, what's good for political parties in general. Fair voting reform is about what is good for the voters and about what is good for all the people of Ontario.

So what would a fair voting system look like in Ontario? To discuss this question, I'll hand the floor back to Joe Murray.

Dr. Murray: June, go ahead.

Ms. June Macdonald: Good afternoon, everybody.

Any recommendations that we make at Fair Vote Canada are predicated and based upon our five basic principles, and we examine all voting systems or other systems in other provinces and nationally by these objectives.

The purpose of Fair Vote Canada, as Wayne has pointed out, is to gain broad, multi-partisan support for an independent, citizen-driven process to allow Canadians to choose a fair voting system based on the principles that all votes are equal and every vote must count.

Fair Vote Canada believes that in order to provide a fair and equal voice for every citizen and to accurately reflect the will of the voters, our voting system must be designed to achieve the following objectives.

First of all, proportional representation: The supporters of all political parties should be fairly represented in proportion to the votes they cast. Parties should have no more and no fewer seats than their popular support warrants. There should be no phony majority governments.

The second one is fair representation for women, minorities and aboriginals. Our Legislatures should reflect the diversity of our society. To enable this, voting systems must be designed to remove barriers to the nomination of those who are underrepresented.

We believe the government should be accountable. Our voting system should give us governance that is stable but responsive, flexible but principled, which reflects the will of the majority but respects the rights of all.

We also are promoting geographic representation. Rural and urban voters must be fairly represented. Provinces and regions must have effective and accountable representation in Parliaments and governments, reflecting real geographic communities.

Finally, real voter choice: Our voting system must promote real competition amongst candidates and political parties. No voter should be disenfranchised for living in a safe riding. No voter should feel compelled to vote strategically for the lesser of evils because their preferred candidate or party has no chance of winning in the riding.

Fair Vote Canada is really not promoting a specific voting system. In your package, you will see fact sheet 6, which gives two possible general outlines of two models that could be used. I'll just go through that a little bit

quickly, but you can look at that in more detail at your leisure: How would a fair voting system work in Ontario? There are two examples there to give you some ideas. The two types of examples could be multi-member districts, or MMP—multi-member proportional—which you are familiar with.

The multi-member district would be a group of ridings that could be combined together and those members elected in a preferential way, if necessary. In the MMP system you would have ridings, as we do now, but also have a list, and that list could be used in conjunction with the ridings to compensate for the disproportionality that we see already with our system. Those are two options that you may want to consider and look at as a basis for any decision-making you may have.

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We used their principles to examine and critique models from other provinces. In fact, in your package we have a 16-page document that critiques the provinces that have already put out a system: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec and British Columbia. We use our five principles to critique each of those provinces' proposals, and we offer suggestions. You will see that those critiques are fairly detailed, and we do offer suggestions for improvement in most cases. No voting system is ever perfect, so we do offer suggestions to improve it and make it better. We ourselves do work on models, and we may be presenting models to you.

Dr. Murray: Having seen those various principles, a lot of the interest and complexity in designing and selecting an appropriate voting system for a province like Ontario has to do with balancing things that we all agree would be good. So one of the key focuses for Fair Vote Ontario and Fair Vote Canada has always been proportionality of the system. We believe it is essential that the voters have their choices reflected in the number of seats each party receives in the Legislature.

Mixed-member systems, where ridings are retained, can still be very proportional with only 40% list seats. There are people out there who are advocating a little less—the law commission was suggesting a third—but once you get below 40%, you start to lose proportionality. Similarly, in STV systems or mixed-member districts, once you get down to about five member districts, you start to lose proportionality. So we have critiqued models like BC's, where they were having fewer members in particular districts in some cases.

Province-wide proportional representation does not have to mean the loss of local or regional representation. STV systems allow for good regional representation in the districts, and obviously, the riding seats in mixed-member proportional provide for local representation. There are also systems—mixed-member proportional—where they allocate the list seats to regions. That's an option if you want to ensure that there aren't province-wide lists that would perhaps be dominated by one region or another, like Toronto. I'm saying that because there have been some questions this afternoon about it.

The second way that we feel these principles should be balanced is to ensure that the fewer barriers to under-

represented demographic groups, the better. When you're looking at PR lists, you're likely to improve the diversity of the people who are elected by having longer lists. In a multi-member district, if you have five, then you're less likely to get better representation of women and visible minorities and other groups. If it were 10, then you're likely to see improvements on those grounds. Similarly, you can run into some difficulties if you have extremely small regions for the regional way of allocating mixed-member proportional lists. These are some of the trade-offs that come into play when you're trying to balance principles.

The third point I'd like to make here is that the more that voters have real choices, the better. Currently, the system blocks emerging parties, like the Green Party, that don't have a regional concentration. There would be a benefit to a northern Ontario separatist party in terms of emerging as a party—they would get elected—but less likely to help a kind of issue that's spread across the province, like environmentalism. We think it's better if voters have real choices in terms of parties that are likely to get elected into the Legislature.

The fourth point, which I've mentioned briefly already, is that regional rather than central lists are possible with province-wide proportionality. Scotland has eight regional lists, and they aren't centrally controlled. Germany has regional MMP systems in four of its states. However, none of these have province-wide proportionality; they concentrate on allocating the seats to parties within each region, and that leads to lower proportionality across the province. There are ways of devising a system that could allow the province-wide popular vote to be used to decide on the number of seats per party, and then to allocate those seats to regions.

The citizens' assembly should be allowed to recommend expanding the Legislature to balance local representation with proportional representation. Recently here in this province, as many of you know, or probably all of you know, we had a larger number of seats. It was 130 before it was reduced. At the current rate of population growth, that would be equivalent to about 139 seats. We think that the citizens' assembly should be allowed to suggest a larger Legislature in order to not force ridings to become too large if they select an MMP system.

A second way that the balancing of local representation with PR could be important, given our political geography, is that they could recommend that a northern Ontario MMP region have a higher proportion of riding seats to list seats to ensure smaller ridings. That would allow for province-wide proportionality but recognize the importance of having members who aren't forced to travel areas larger than Germany. I think Lake Nipigon is about the size of Germany altogether. We think it's important to recognize some of these concerns around the north and rural areas, but they can be incorporated into either MMP or STV systems. It would depend on the sorts of instructions that are given to the boundaries commission.

Other principles complement stable and effective government. I know some of you, like Norm, are concerned

about this, but PR governments display as much stability as the current Ontario system, in terms of the length of time the administration or government has before a new election or a new administration comes in. The law commission report said that in recent transition countries like Scotland and New Zealand, there was a slight tendency to have slightly shorter administrations. Lijphart, in a much broader study looking at all forms of consensus-based government as opposed to first-past-the-post governments, found that it was about the same, no statistical difference. Lijphart also found that a number of other statistical, empirical measures were better under PR governments. There was improved citizen satisfaction with the way democracy works. Here in Canada, I think there is a lot of concern that people are feeling that our democratic system isn't working well. This would be one way to improve that, by bringing in a proportional system.

Surprisingly to some, the economic record of PR governments is at least as effective as first-past-the-post systems, which are often said to be better because you can make tough decisions in tough times. The statistics show that they're actually better on inflation control and about the same on other measures. The reason for this is that there are fewer policy lurches from left to right under coalition types of governments, which are more consensus-based. That provides economic actors with a more stable background to make their decisions and fewer years spent trying to work through a new agenda by a bureaucracy.

Finally, the proximity of government policy views and citizen views is much, much closer under PR governments than under first-past-the-post or especially alternative vote systems. That's because the citizen views are better represented in government. A number of these points are summarized and expanded upon, in fact, in one of your documents, *Can Fair Voting Systems Really Make a Difference?* summarizing Lijphart's research.

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We believe there are some unfair alternatives out there. Australia's alternative vote system, which is used for their Lower House, would be grossly unfair, preserving and even exacerbating our current problems. As Caroline Di Cocco was mentioning earlier, it actually worsens proportionality. It would make it so that people's votes weren't fairly represented in the Legislature.

Parallel systems that provide only a small element of proportionality, like Japan's or the system advocated by the *Globe and Mail*, would not ensure that all voters are treated equally. They were talking about proportionality in their series of four editorials on PR systems, but they ended up coming down for what's called mixed-member majoritarian rather than mixed-member proportional. In mixed-member majoritarian, the riding seats are allocated as we currently experience and as the riding seats would be under MMP, but the list seats, instead of being allocated to make sure that the parties are represented fairly in the Legislature according to popular will, are actually allocated according to party support. So having won most of the riding seats, the leading party will get

most of the list seats as well. That is not the kind of system that we're in favour of. We're much more focused on improving proportionality than that.

In conclusion, there is no perfect voting system. There are trade-offs involved. There are a lot of different objectives that we're trying to achieve: improving accountability, improving fairness. We've identified the principles that we think are most important and how they could be balanced. We need to start with these principles of fair voting when looking at any sort of reform.

We'd like to re-emphasize a point that others have made, and that is that the citizens' assembly should be allowed to propose more than one alternative, if necessary. In British Columbia they were looking very closely at two alternatives. A number of people were of the view that if the other alternative, MMP, had been put to the vote, it might have done better in the referendum than STV, because of the complexity of BC's STV. We think it should be up to the citizens' assembly. If they end up finding that one is best and they only want one, that's fine. But if they want to propose ranking the current system and two alternatives, that would be fine as well.

Also, reiterating a number of concerns that I understand you heard yesterday, it's really important in our view that there be an adequate education budget for the referendum. In British Columbia they didn't provide enough funds. A lot of people didn't know there was even a referendum and didn't know the details of the system they were voting on. This is in very marked contrast to what happened in New Zealand, where a lot of funds had been set aside and people felt that they were confident they understood the alternatives being presented to them in the referendum.

Our last point is that we believe it's important for this committee to endorse majority rule for the referendum rather than have only super-majorities required. It has been decades and decades since there was a true majority government in Ontario in terms of 50% plus one of the vote, yet we've been able to get along fine. If 50% plus one is enough to change our Constitution, surely it should be enough to change our voting system.

Thank you very much for your time. We look forward to your questions.

Mr. Prue: First of all, thank you; it was an excellent presentation. I really appreciate this Dubious Democracy. I think it sets it out very well.

The question I have is in terms of the timing. I've asked this question of other groups. New Zealand did it in two stages, first of all asking the people if they wanted change, and if they wanted change, "Here are some of the proposals. Which one do you like?" Then they went away, developed the entire scheme, passed the legislation and said, "Here it is. Yes or No." BC tried to do it all at once, and I think this is the problem with BC. We're going to discuss that with them, obviously, later. They went out and had a citizens' group, which was good, and which came forward with a proposal that was kind of mixed. But they didn't spend any money, and then they put it to the people who did not understand the full implications. I

think that's fair; they didn't know whether they were getting more representatives, fewer representatives, how it was dealing with rural places versus urban places. It was very convoluted and didn't pass.

Do you propose doing this in one stage or in two, like New Zealand or BC, and then again, if it's in two, how long do you think this should take?

Dr. Murray: Thank you for that excellent question; it's one that our organization hasn't grappled with in a great amount of detail. In terms of the timing, we were of the view last winter that it would be possible to have a citizens' assembly starting up right now and having eight months of work, and then having time for a referendum before the 2006 municipal election. That would allow for a lot of voter education during the process of the citizens' assembly, which garners a lot of media attention. So that's one of the benefits of having a citizens' assembly, in our view, and it should be funded to have local community meetings and other ways of bringing people into a greater awareness of the issue. Then that might allow for implementation for a 2007 election. We feel that the option of having a boundaries commission do some work has to be there, and that takes a lot of time in terms of the hearings they would have to hold, unless you're willing to go to 40% larger than our current ridings in terms of an MMP list. Even just choosing a district under STV would require a boundaries commission to do some work. At this point, it's not feasible to have any implementation for 2007. I think that we'd be in agreement on that.

With respect to whether there should be one or two referendums, we have been proposing one referendum and that would be enough for the government to have a mandate to put together all the details. I think that was probably in large measure because that was what was being discussed in British Columbia, and it might be something that we could review. I don't know if Wayne or June wants to comment further on that.

Mr. Smith: Sure. As you say, they had two referendums in New Zealand, one to say, "Which alternative system do you like the best?" and then a second one to say, "Do you like the new system or do you like the old system?" There's no reason that couldn't be combined into one referendum: "Do you like option A, option B or the status quo?" and use a preferential ballot on that. So that could happen, and we would like to see that happen by the election of 2007.

Mr. Prue: Thank you.

Ms. Wynne: I just wanted to ask you about the issue of adequate education. I know you talked about an adequate budget but, for me, I want to know what you think the hallmarks of a good public education campaign would be. You've been doing this for a while now; you've been talking to people about this. It's not simple stuff, always, to talk to people about. So what would you see? You've said town hall meetings, but are there particular things that you think need to be done in order to help people grapple with this? It's not that I think people can't under-

stand it, because I think they can, but it's a matter of getting to people and getting them engaged in it.

Dr. Murray: Yes, I think it would be worthwhile to bring in some adult educators and hear from experts in the area. In terms of the models that we've discussed, one is funding by a non-partisan agency like Elections Ontario to just inform people about the vote. The second is to fund both yes and no sides during a referendum. We would be very happy, since we do have adult educators involved in our work, including our executive director, who is unfortunately ill and can't be with us today, to provide more information on that since we have done some work in thinking that through.

Ms. Wynne: OK. So you might actually have some specific ideas and suggestions about how to do that kind of campaign?

Dr. Murray: Yes, which we'd be happy to share with you. I don't have them at my fingertips at the moment.

Ms. Wynne: Great. Thanks.

Dr. Murray: Sorry. We had a further response.

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Ms. Macdonald: We have done workshops in high schools, where we have something called a "chocolate bar ballot," and we compare different systems. We've also done workshops with adult groups, where we give them ballots and they work it through. They understand it quite quickly.

Ms. Wynne: Great.

Mr. Smith: Could I make a comment too? Education is just a huge job for us. Most Canadians simply haven't thought about this: "What? There's some other way to vote? What are you talking about?"

The other point I wanted to make is that we can't count on the media to do the job of educating people. They just regard it as, "Oh, that's too boring. People aren't interested in that." We saw that in BC; it just didn't exist in the media.

Ms. Wynne: That's exactly what I was getting at. I think we're going to need to find some alternative ideas, so it's great that you've thought some of that through.

Mr. Patten: Thank you for your presentation. I thought it was very good. You mentioned in your presentation the proportionality of participation. In particular, you identified women and aboriginal people. I've been struggling personally with the aspect of what kind of an opportunity we might provide for greater participation from our First Nations people. I wonder if you have any more comments on that specifically. I know there were references historically from the Lortie commission, for example, federally. I know we have had some members from the aboriginal community in Manitoba. With Saskatchewan's population growth, it's only a matter of time before you'll see the growth there. In Ontario, I'm not so sure. While as an overall percentage in Ontario they're not high, in northern Ontario they are, and very important, and yet still we're having difficulty looking at ways of participation there. I feel strongly enough that I think, quite frankly, as in New Zealand, we might carve out a seat or two for our First Nations people as a sign of

respect and acknowledgement of the contribution they make to our society, obviously. Do you have any comment on that?

Dr. Murray: We have looked at this issue and we have some views, but we really feel that it's something that needs to be discussed with aboriginal communities in Ontario. It's our view that proportional representation systems would improve their chance of getting adequate representation in the Legislature. Certainly, in the New Zealand experience, it improved it quite a bit, but the representation of Maori in their Legislature still wasn't up to the full percentage of the population. I believe that in 2002, of the 19 Maori MPs, 12 of them were from regular seats and seven of them were from special Maori seats that they have under their constitutional arrangements, going back to the Waitangi Treaty, I believe. Together, the 19 seats are about equivalent to their representation in the population. So it would be something to be considered, but I think it has to be done in concert with the people affected and their notion of self-government rights.

The Chair: I have Ms. Smith and then Mr. Sterling.

Ms. Smith: Actually, Ms. Wynne asked exactly my question, almost word for word, which is a bit frightening. We've spent too much time in the last two days in this room together, I think. So I did want to focus on education.

You said that you thought the referenda—and this is building on what was asked before—could be held simultaneously, the kind of one-two step. One of the concerns we've heard is that the education component is important, that people need to understand what they're voting for and all of the complexities around the various proposals, and that's why it has been commented that a two-stage process is a better way. I just wanted your comment on that.

Also, just kind of in the greater education outlook, one of the other presenters suggested that we could look at two different systems in the province: one for rural areas and one for the more urban areas. I wonder what your views would be on that.

Dr. Murray: I'll speak to the second point first. The idea that we could have one system for rural areas and another for urban voters is not one that our organization would support. We feel that fairness means equality for all citizens. We would also have concerns in particular with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's inclusion of alternative voting in the system, because that would make the system worse in terms of its proportionality.

Yes, we advocate a single system for all of Ontario. But there may be some opportunity for small adjustments to the size of ridings in the north, or something like that, to try to reflect the difficulties that members have up in there in meeting all of their constituents and representing them properly.

Does someone else want to speak?

Mr. Smith: Yes. I'd just like to make the point that we have a sort of rigid, one-dimensional system now that's based entirely on geography, and having multi-

member ridings or lists gives us enormous flexibility in terms of how we can set things up. As we mentioned before, if you set up a northern region, maybe it's more important to have good geographic coverage than it is to have representation of diversity in that area, so you have 20% list seats. In downtown Toronto, maybe it's more important to represent diversity than it is to worry about geographic coverage, so maybe you have 50% list seats. I just wanted to make that point.

Our central point is that we have options, we have choices in how we set up our voting system, and we can set it up in such a way that it takes care of the political and geographic and all sorts of realities that we have to deal with in Ontario.

Dr. Murray: With regard to your first point, we don't want to see a neverendum sort of process, where you get fatigue and people complaining about the length and complexity and, "Why do we need to answer and then answer again?" That's why we're in favour of either a referendum or perhaps a referendum which allows people to rank the alternatives. That seems to be simpler from the perspective of the population. I suppose you're right that there would be more opportunity for learning if it was two separate referendums.

My sense was that the process in British Columbia, the election, overtook a bunch of the coverage from the debate around whether to move to an alternative voting system. If one were to fund a yes and no side, as well as a non-partisan group to help out in that, it would still get enough coverage to allow people to educate themselves.

Ms. Smith: I have a follow-up on that. We had some suggestions from presenters yesterday about the timing of the referendum. Tying it to a general election does provide some turnout, whereas having a referendum on its own may not get as high a turnout. What would your organization's view be on when such a referendum should take place?

Dr. Murray: Our preference is that it occur at a general election because it will provide more legitimacy when enough people have participated. Alternatively, a municipal election is another good time. We are also concerned about the expense that might be involved in trying to mount a referendum all on its own. I'm not sure of the details, but I think that it costs tens of millions to try to hold an election across the province.

Mr. Sterling: Thank you very much for your presentation. As I understand it, your position is that, in terms of the proportional representation, the lists would be prepared by the party and it would be up to the party's positioning as to how the names got on that list. Is that correct?

Dr. Murray: We have no policy stating that a law should determine how the parties do their work. I think it's up to parties whether they would like to do things like ensure representation regionally or by gender or by demographic group or by ideology. So yes, that is our position.

Mr. Sterling: How do we explain to the public that this is a democratic process, then, when they do not get a

chance to pick, from a group of candidates, who they would like from your list or the other party's list or my party's list or whatever?

Dr. Murray: There is a difference in our view between creating the list and then whether the ballot that people are presented with at election time is an open or closed list. In a number of jurisdictions, it's something that's called an open list, where there is a ranking, maybe done democratically or maybe by the party centrally, and then people are allowed to either rank the candidates within a party numerically—first choice, second choice, third choice—or they can vote for a particular one, which would improve that candidate's ranking in the order of the list. So there are alternatives like this, which we think are very important details that would need to be worked out by a citizens' assembly. In British Columbia, they were starting to get into some of those details, but they didn't because they selected STV for further elaboration.

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Mr. Sterling: But the beauty of the STV is that it allows the constituent voter the most choice possible; in other words, they're allowing the voter not only to pick a party but to pick five different choices from three different parties, or whatever the combination thereof.

Dr. Murray: I'd like Wayne to speak to your questions after me, but I'd just like to say that just like MMP has variations, so does STV. In certain STV variations, there are not the opportunities to vote cross-party. In the BC STV, that was certainly a big focus.

Mr. Smith: I just wanted to make the point that how candidates are nominated is not, strictly speaking, a function of the voting system. Whether you're nominating one candidate to run in a riding or 10 candidates in a riding, there's a range of ways to do it, from election by party members to having them parachuted in by the leadership of the party. That pertains just as much to the single-member ridings we have now as to a multi-member riding or a list. So strictly speaking, that's not a relevant question. Of course, however the candidates get on the list, nobody gets elected from that list unless people vote for the list.

Mr. Sterling: But a closed list does preclude the elector from taking number 12 over number one.

Dr. Murray: That's right. So I have to agree with you. Under both STV and MMP there are alternatives that would prevent voters from re-ranking the list.

Mr. Sterling: Joe, you and I met earlier this week and talked a little bit about your organization. My understanding is that your organization is not homogeneous in terms of the electoral map of Ontario. I understand you have more representatives of one political party than the others.

Dr. Murray: Yes. If I could direct people's attention both to the national advisory board and the list of prominent Ontarians who have signed our petition; I believe they're in your package. I think you'll notice that there's a broad selection of people from different parties. We have Lincoln Alexander, Rick Anderson, Patrick Boyer and a number of others from the right of the political

system. I think Walter Robinson is another. That's on our national advisory board. In terms of New Democrats, there are a number, like Lorne Nystrom. In addition to Hugh Segal, our new senator, there are some other people like Ted White. Who supports the call for voting reform in Ontario? Here's Ed Broadbent's name. I think there are a number of prominent Liberals as well, like Tom Kent.

The Chair: I believe we have the list. You've been kind enough to provide us with the list, so I don't believe that we need you to read them through. I think we can do that. It certainly is here. Thank you very much for that.

I have one more question from—

Mr. Sterling: Just a minute, Madam Chair. I was told by Dr. Murray that the Ontario chapter was dominated by one political party, and that's not what I'm hearing back.

Dr. Murray: No. I had said that the membership of Fair Vote in British Columbia had a stronger proportion from the right of the political spectrum, and here in Ontario it is more to the left—that's right—and the Green Party.

The Chair: Again, I thank you for providing the list to us. I'll ask Mr. Arthurs if he's up for questions.

Mr. Arthurs: I will keep it short, Chair—

The Chair: You always do.

Mr. Arthurs: —in the interests of time. I just need clarity, because I asked the same question of the deputy leader of the Green Party. I think it's just a misnomer in how people approach this. When you were queried as to referendum questions, whether it should be one question at one time and then subsequent choices, you made the point that it could be option A, option B, or the status quo.

Let me pose to you and see if you agree that a ballot question of that nature might read: "(a) Do you choose the status quo or do you believe in change?" That would be (a). Regardless of your response to that, yes or no, you would still have a choice or a ranking under (b): "Here are the options."

Dr. Murray: We'd be very pleased with a ballot with those two questions.

Mr. Arthurs: Otherwise, you're disenfranchising all those people who would opt for the status quo.

Dr. Murray: That's right.

Mr. Arthurs: OK, and my final quick question: You made reference to Australia's alternative vote system as grossly unfair and even exacerbating. As I understand it—and very limitedly at this point, in a limited fashion, getting more educated as we go—the Australian system effectively ensures that the individual constituent member has more than 50% of the vote at the end of the day. Your objective is to ensure that on a province-wide or national basis there is proportionality based on the votes across the province, as represented by the parties?

Dr. Murray: Australia has two systems, both alternative vote and STV, for different levels. I think their Senate is STV. I was talking about alternative vote in that particular point; you're right. So alternative vote requires 50% of voters to have expressed some preference, but

that doesn't mean that 50% take that candidate as their first choice. Our concern is that in the past 25 years the average turnout in Ontario elections is around 60%; 40% aren't coming out to express even a first choice. We want people not to be forced to say, "OK. I'll take that second-best or least-worst option." So the proportionality we're interested in is people's first preferences.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the presentation. It certainly will be useful as we move forward on this journey.

Dr. Murray: Thank you for your time today. Sorry we took a bit extra.

EQUAL VOICE

The Chair: I'd like to ask our next presenters here. We're running just a little bit late. I want to welcome Equal Voice here. Rosemary Speirs is the founder and chair. We have with us as well Frances Lankin, Janet Ecker and Kim Donaldson. Rosemary Speirs, the floor is yours.

Ms. Rosemary Speirs: It's late in the day, and I know you're all hot and probably tired. I'm not going to read this whole brief, but I'd like to read a bit of it, if I may.

Some of you are familiar with Equal Voice, I know, but some are not. So I thought I'd begin by telling you who we are. You're aware, of course, that the Equal Voice steering committee members with me today have been influential players in all the three major Ontario parties: Janet Ecker is the former Conservative finance minister, Frances Lankin was a senior minister in Bob Rae's government, and Kim Donaldson is the former executive vice-president of the Ontario Liberal Party. They represent the way Equal Voice is constituted.

We're a national volunteer organization which recruits elected politicians and backroom activists, among others, to work across party lines to promote the cause of fair elected representation for women. Today, we have about 600 members and supporters coming from every province and every major political party.

First, we'd like to congratulate the members of the select committee on electoral reform for the wording of your terms of reference, which require you to take into consideration the impact that different electoral methods would have on gender equality. I know a number of Legislature members, some of them on this committee, went to bat to get fair representation for women on the agenda of democratic renewal, and we're happy to see that requirement in your terms.

We don't think there's much point to electoral reform unless we choose a system that will throw down the present barriers and permit more women to stand and be elected to political office. Only 23 women sit today in the Ontario Legislature, 22% of the total members. Twenty-two per cent is not enough to ensure women's interests are represented when laws or policies are passed that may affect the female half of the population equally or even more. This is the biggest gap in our so-called repre-

sentative democracy, and it's out of sync with the values of voters.

1530

We have with us here today, in the blue jacket there, the vice-chair of Equal Voice, Donna Dasko, who is vice-president of Environics Research. Donna's an expert on Canadian public opinion. She'll tell you that Ontario voters want to see more women elected and are as ready to vote for female representatives as for male.

Given the opportunity, the polling tells us Ontarians would be happy to vote for women candidates. The problem is not the voter; the problem lies with the gatekeepers of political opportunity. Party leaders assure us that they want larger slates of women candidates and are pulling out all the stops to find them. We can only conclude, since it doesn't happen, that the system smothers the good intentions.

What do we think you can do? We think the strongest possible signal of change would be reform of the voting system to introduce an element of proportional representation. We're asking you to consider the recommendations of the Law Commission of Canada, which proposed that two thirds of seats continue to be elected under our present first-past-the-post riding-based system and the remaining one third be elected by proportional representation. Such a system, as you know, would be called mixed-member proportional, or MMP. Not all MMP systems are equal, however, and for the purposes of electing women, it's very important that the lists which parties draw up for these seats be based on broad regions. In a broad list, parties would not dare to field slates that are mainly men or put women candidates at the bottom. It is this element, broad lists that are open to public scrutiny, that we believe will encourage the election of more women to the Legislature.

Electoral financing reform may not be part of your mandate, but if it is in your purview, Equal Voice urges you to recommend removal of the money barrier to women's candidacies. Most women do not have the financial resources of men or access to Bay Street funding, so the high costs of running for nomination and election discourage many of them at the entry point. Strict spending limits should be placed on nomination battles, leadership contests and all election activity.

The Legislature could require political parties to adopt initiatives to promote the nomination of more women, including recruitment policies and targets for the number of women candidates on party lists, and report yearly to a legislative committee on the progress the parties are making.

We're also asking the select committee to consider measures to ensure that local nomination meetings are democratic and fair, including the possibility that nominations would be overseen by the Chief Election Officer of Ontario.

But what is most important to us, what we're really asking, is that whatever specific measures the select committee members may recommend, we ask that you take the opportunity to tell the government that the election of

more women is a priority in Ontario and that any reform introduced must contribute to that goal.

Now I'd like to turn over this microphone to the three experts in practical politics I have with me today. Each of them would like to spend a couple of minutes with you.

Ms. Frances Lankin: If I may begin.

The Chair: Ms. Lankin, if you want to say your name for the record.

Ms. Lankin: Frances Lankin. I'm a former member of this Legislative Assembly. I'm currently non-partisan in my role at United Way, but a member of Equal Voice for a number of years in the multi-partisan representation that you see here. If I may, that's one of the first points I want to stress that Rosemary made. Mr. Sterling, to your point earlier, I think that's an interesting observation you made, but I would say that here, this organization has worked very hard to ensure that we have multi-party representation as well as women who have no partisan affiliation. It's something that we're quite proud of. We are not broadly representative, in that there are very few men who are members of our organization, although there are some. We are also, while not represented here today just by virtue of who's available, showing the diversity of our group in terms of ethnocultural diversity, which is also something that we strive for as an organization and that you can see reflected in our national membership.

To us it is really critical to stress all the points that Rosemary made about what we're asking for, but an over-riding concern of ensuring that the citizens' assembly, as they're looking at this, and that the government, as they're looking at legislation, have as one of the overriding considerations the fair and equal representation of women in elected politics. We strive to reach this at all levels. The opportunity here for democratic renewal at the level of the province of Ontario is very exciting to us and it's an opportunity for this message to be delivered.

I want to take a second just to tell you why I think it matters. I could tell you a whole lot about how I think organizational cultures change and institutional cultures change when there's fair gender balance and representation. If I think back to some of the past eclectic career options that I've chosen, I was at one point in time the first female jail guard in Ontario, working at the Don Jail—one of three, I should say; there were three of us. It was a horrendous workplace atmosphere to be a minority of that sort. As the numbers changed over the years, with a particular focus in hiring initiatives by the Ontario government, the workplace culture changed dramatically because of the interaction of a different gender balance.

It would be hard for people to believe that there would be a change, for example, in the way the Legislative Assembly behaved, because many of us were some of the worst offenders in terms of the criticisms of the Legislative Assembly. But I think the culture of how issues are brought forward, how consensus is arrived at and what focus is given would have a different reflection of views

from women that is important and that is just currently missing.

I think the most poignant example I can give was the time I spent in my elected career in Ontario as a member of the cabinet of Ontario, the executive council of Ontario. I was very fortunate, actually, to be there at a time when the Premier of the day made a concerted effort to address the issue of gender balance. While there was a healthy percentage of women elected, it wasn't great overall in that government. I think it was something like 23% or 24%. In cabinet, however, 11 out of 26 or 27 cabinet ministers were women; it was about 42%. It was a qualitative and quantitative difference.

What it meant in real terms around the table: For example, when discussions came up about the way in which, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, judges were appointed in the province—with all the protections they need to be at arm's length from the politics and the governance of the day—it was the women at the table who pointed out the issues of gender balance around the judiciary and what that meant in terms of how case law was being established and how the differing values were not being reflected. There was an absence of that in the judicial decision-making process. It was through ensuring that the committee making the independent recommendations for appointment of judges had a gender balance and that it was, as we're asking you to do, a priority consideration in actively seeking out—not in any way to lessen the quality of the candidates that were being brought forth, but to actively seek out and try to make a difference. It was that that made an absolute difference in the appointments of judiciary for a period of time going forward. That's a success story, from my perspective.

Another example: In discussions around federal-provincial-municipal infrastructure programs—they're a feature of every government that comes along, and at different times they are very important tools for economic development and job creation. We happened to be in government at a time when there was a depressed economic situation and high unemployment, and certainly the infrastructure program was seen very strongly as a job creation program. When you look at that, while you might see that there were some spin-off jobs and some future potential jobs that would be equally shared among the population, the majority of the jobs that were actually being created were jobs in construction. As there is an under-representation of women in the trades and in construction, you would therefore see that the efforts and the dollars, the taxpayer expenditures, to create jobs and economic activity, which I again admit will have spin-offs—but the primary investment was investing in jobs that by and large excluded opportunities for employment of women in large numbers.

The women around the table brought that to the attention of the cabinet, and the discussion around the table changed. Mechanisms were considered, developed and implemented to also, as part of the definition of infrastructure, look at social and public infrastructure like

child care, child care jobs and other sorts of employment opportunities in the social sector, where there is perhaps a preponderance of employment of women.

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That was again a significant impact on policy decision-making by just the kind of discussion that was brought forward.

There were certainly others, and I won't go through a long history of these discussions. What I would say is that irrespective of whether those two issues capture your attention, the fact that we are a multi-partisan group underscores our belief that women's voices from all political perspectives, from the right to the left of the political spectrum, are important voices in the overall debate and that currently, as our system has worked, we have missed a balance of hearing those voices. We think it absolutely makes a difference; my real-life experience was that it made a huge difference. We ask you, with all of the considerations you have—and I think there are some really tough questions around lists and how you keep people connected to their constituencies. As former politicians, Janet and I, in our discussions and debates, have stressed that need. There are tough issues, but we would ask you to keep this one issue foremost as one of the considerations to put forward for both the government and the citizens' assembly.

Ms. Janet Ecker: I don't envy you—hot summer days in a stuffy committee room. I remember that.

The Chair: Could you please provide your name for the record.

Ms. Ecker: Certainly, Madam Chair: Janet Ecker, former member of the Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to add to the points that Rosemary and Frances have made today. First of all, making one of the clear objectives of this initiative to try and remedy gender balance I think is important. If a Legislative Assembly, in a democratic society, seeks to reflect the society it is governing, having some representation that represents the population is very important. That should not be taken to mean that we are advocating for mandated targets, because that is not something we support.

However, when I started with the group, primarily because I agree that we need to have more women in our elected process at all levels, I was opposed to proportional representation because I believe very strongly in that link to a constituency and first-past-the-post and all of those. I still think there are a lot of strengths to that system and I don't think we should lose that. But as I looked at what has happened in other jurisdictions and started to consider how we can actually, all of us, in all three parties, stop talking about wanting more women and actually try to produce more women from our respective nominations and various processes, the law reform commission's recommendation about a portion of your seats I started to find very attractive. One of the reasons that I think it needs to be seriously considered by this committee is that as the result of your nomination process and your election process, a political party, indeed a government, may find itself with a lack of representation

in some area, whether it's geographic, whether it's gender, whether it's whatever: urban, rural, you name it. For caucus, cabinet and party discussions to adequately assess an issue, I think you need as much diversity in that room as you can get.

Proportional representation provides a political party with an opportunity to round out the slate, if you will, of what the nomination process may well have produced for them. I think it gives a party an opportunity to redress that, to bring in people who, for many reasons, were not able to come through a nomination process or election process or whatever, without interfering unduly in that constituency-based system. As I said, I think it has a lot of strengths. That is one of the reasons why I have been convinced that a portion of the seats be proportional representation. I think it's something that this committee should seriously look at.

The Chair: Thank you. We have another speaker.

Ms. Kim Donaldson: My name is Kim Donaldson. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this endeavour, which is worthy and I hope bold in what it will bring to the province of Ontario. My involvement has been more of a nuts-and-bolts, behind-the-scenes variety. I have been involved with the nuts and bolts of nominations in the 2003 and the 1999 elections for the Liberal Party. I feel quite confident in saying that from the very top of the party—that would be the current Premier—to any member of the rank and file I've spoken to, all would support the notion that it's time for more women. It just is. It's just and it's fair. But I would also observe that good intentions are not enough and that when the rubber hits the road, all the good intentions, stated either privately behind closed doors or publicly, don't seem to amount to more than 22%. There's nothing systemic about it. There's no obvious intent to exclude, but when it just works out, that's the way it is.

Certainly, in this room many of us are familiar with some of the really grim and awful nominations, specifically within our own party, and it would be better if there was some mechanism to simply avoid that ugliness. It's divisive on the ground. I'd like to echo Janet Ecker's observation that it's not about mandated targets—I believe that was Janet or Frances—but it is about some measure of control, I would say, at the governmental level, the legal level. And I would go so far as to say that there should be some work done at the party level.

I think all three parties, frankly, are complicit. I think you can work a set of rules any way you want to if it's only a rule, no matter what party you're a member of, but I would absolutely agree that, at stated goals and endeavours, the NDP is miles ahead of the other two parties in terms of the inclusion of women.

To the criticism that if we look after women we have to look after everyone else too, I would say firmly and clearly that women are everyone else too, all right? Women are everything. I'm not even going to get into defining what they are, but we are everything. We are every possible group that you would possibly want to include, so I can't see that there would be any merit in that as well.

I would just end with observing that good intentions are not enough. They will not work themselves out at the end of a process to bring you more than you have now. We've had X many years of what we have now and we're still languishing at 21%. I urge you. This is your opportunity to do something big. It's your opportunity to blaze a trail and to be leaders and not followers. I would think that after all the endeavour, all the intent and all the hours spent in this room that if the best thing we can come up with is voting on-line, it will have been a sorry mess indeed. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that. We have a number of people who are ready to ask questions.

Mr. Arthurs: Can I just first say thank you for the deputation. It's been rather fun and interesting hearing from three senior executives, either with their party or in government. It's good to see each of you.

If I could have a lighter moment with Ms. Ecker, Janet, we've served in office in different capacities at the same time, we've continued to work together in our communities, but in spite of the fact that I would like to help you with Equal Voice, I won't be resigning. But what I will do in that regard, if there is a provincial by-election anywhere near us following a federal election, I will do everything I can to support a woman candidate of a Liberal stripe to bring her to this Legislature.

Ms. Ecker: You had me going there for a minute. I thought I was going to get a line in the campaign brochure.

Mr. Sterling: For a minute there, I thought he was going to be a gentleman.

Ms. Ecker: I know. It was close.

Mr. Arthurs: We got close. I'm going to ask, though, probably through research, for just a bit of information, and I'm sure it won't be taken the wrong way. I need to know a little more information; I just don't know it. We talk about the percentage of women at 21%, 22%, 23% or 24%, whatever it might be. I don't have any statistics, any data—and you may—on how many women candidates there were across the 103 ridings that might have finished first or second, in essence having had the opportunity and capacity to be serving. Janet and I had that experience, so it's a personal kind of experience that I've had. I'm just interested to the extent that it enhances our information about what the implications are within changes in the system, where those changes have to occur and how they might occur, whether it's through proportional representation or actions at the party, and to what extent that bar has to be raised to achieve a more reasonable opportunity to create a greater gender balance.

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Ms. Speirs: You're hitting right at the crux of the matter, I think. The number of women nominated is exactly equal to the number who get elected. It's usually 21% in all jurisdictions across the country and 21% elected. Therefore the problem, we think, lies with the local riding associations that aren't nominating enough women. They'd be elected if they were nominated.

I don't want to be accusing local riding associations of systemic discrimination, but I think maybe what happens

is that when they sit down and look at their own particular needs, the local riding association thinks that the best candidate is going to be the white male professional with two children. This happens in all the ridings across the province, and there is no mechanism for ensuring an overview that we need to have a certain number of women or represent certain communities. We think that proportional representation would add that element so that parties would be looking at their whole slate and not trying to scramble at the last moment to add some star women.

Ms. Lankin: I'd just like to add a point to that. I think what Rosemary has said is true, and Kim commented about all parties not doing a good enough job, but I think that there is a reality about the view of politics that does not attract women in large numbers. I think it's hard to find women to run. Part of what has to happen is the critical mass, as in Malcolm Gladwell's *Tipping Point*. There has to be a change in the nature of political life and how it's seen to be relevant to more people.

This is, in a sense, part of what you're struggling with overall: declining interest in our democratic systems and structures as they are. Within that, the gender issue is a particular subset of that and demonstrates itself in it being difficult to encourage a lot of women beyond the numbers we have seen. There are the notable nomination fights that happen. That's part of the democratic process. I think the concept of proportional representation with a mixed-list system allows for a systemic way to address what is a real issue today and beyond.

The last thing I would say is that it's hard to think about the change, and there are a lot of problems; the previous presentation said that there is no perfect system. There are a lot of problems with any of the systems. There are huge problems with the system we have now, although all of us who have experienced that system and have won and lost in that system are comfortable with it because we know it. We need to stretch and reach outside that box.

Ms. Ecker: Just to add to the points: First of all I would say, based on my experience and my knowledge on this, that there is not a bias in the electorate against women now to vote. I've run against women, I've run against men; I've been involved. It's an irrelevant issue out there. That is not the problem.

Second, I think the critical mass point is important. The more role models that people see, that young women see, in politics—people who look like them and sound like them—the better it is to try and encourage more women.

The third and final point: I think when you're looking at options and solutions here, often in public policy politics there gets to be a great attraction, that something seems to be the right solution. Everybody says that our first-past-the-post system is the problem, that we need whatever it is—STV, proportional representation. I have to tell you, I've been involved in the political process at different levels over 20, 25 years and never yet have met a voter who has said to me, "You know, I don't like that political system because you don't have proportional

representation.” They don’t like the system, they get mad at the system and they get cynical. There are a lot of reasons; the actual mechanism by which they vote is not one of them. So I think that as you look at those options it is important and we have to make sure that we’re choosing options that encourage more women, but it is not, in and of itself, the solution to this problem.

Ms. Speirs: It’s true that the number of women standing for election is either stalled or declining at every level across the country. But in countries where the doors have been thrown open by, say, electoral reform or by political parties announcing that they’re going to run more women or even by legislative requirements that there be women, lots of women come forward to stand. So I think, if there’s a signal given, that women will run.

The Chair: Any other comment there? All right.

Mr. Miller: Thank you for your presentation today. Yesterday we had a presentation where we were given a list of participation by women around the world, and I see that Canada is 37th on the list, with 21% women elected nationally. I also note on this list that Rwanda is number one, actually, but that Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands are numbers two to six, with 45%, down to 36%, elected women members. I’m just wondering if you’ve looked at their systems and if there are any parts of their systems that you’d like to see put in place here. It sounds like you’re recommending a mixed-member proportional system, so keeping a constituency, but then having a province-wide list as part of it.

Ms. Speirs: Broad lists, yes. We do know that countries that have PR systems elect more women and that countries that have this system elect fewer women; that would be the United States, Great Britain and Canada. And we know that countries that have list systems as part of their proportional representation do best in electing women.

Mr. Miller: On the same list, New Zealand is on there now. They’ve had mixed-member proportional for a few elections and they’re at 28%, so they’re better than we are anyway. So is there anything from the Scandinavian systems that you would like to see in this system that might happen here in Ontario?

Ms. Speirs: I don’t know when it would happen here, but the advantage of a list system is that you can use it for affirmative action. In Sweden they have what’s called the “zipper.” I don’t have the right name because it’s actually named after a Swedish dance, where first the male asks the female to dance and then the woman asks the man to dance. So it’s an alternate; it’s on the list as man, woman, man, woman.

Mr. Miller: So on the list it’s required that it be man, woman, man, woman.

Ms. Speirs: Yes. So there are different methods of doing that. We’re not calling for those kinds of quotas now. If we ever did call for a quota, I would hope that it would be gender-neutral, as it’s done in Sweden, where the law says that you can never have less than 40% of either sex. It doesn’t say that you have to have so many women or so many men.

Mr. Miller: My only other question to do with that—I know there are lots of other people with questions—is on the province-wide list that you’re recommending. I’m wondering what would happen to representation especially in northern Ontario, where we currently have 11 seats and we’re seeing a decline in population. Unless the number of legislators is increased—so you might want to suggest whether you think the number should be increased—how would you deal with especially northern Ontario and the rural areas where the ridings are getting awfully big?

Ms. Speirs: Because of those problems, we think you should increase the House and perhaps go back to what it was.

Mr. Miller: So what’s the size that you would make the Legislature?

Ms. Speirs: I don’t have that in my head. Those are details that we haven’t considered.

Mr. Prue: This ties right into my question. Janet, I have to say I welcome the catharsis here, the change. This was a change from the Fewer Politicians Act to what is potentially now the More Politicians Act, because for this to possibly work, we are going to have to add additional politicians. It’s been discussed that if we went back, and the suggestion has just been made to go back to the number we had, which is 130, that would add 27 or perhaps 24 seats on a list system to accommodate your issue. Do you see any merit in going back? This is a difficult question. I’m asking you specifically because you were part of the group that supported the Fewer Politicians Act. Do you see any merit to going back to the number or even a greater number than was here in 1999?

Ms. Ecker: I think what’s important is to ask the question. Certainly, as I recall Premier Harris’s conversations around this—and again, I don’t think I’ve ever met a voter who has said to me that the solution to our problem is more politicians. That was the principle by which he was approaching that, that we had gotten out of whack on the representation side. More government is not necessarily the answer.

The question that I think you have to ask yourself is, what is the basis upon which you want to divide up your ridings and divide up your membership? Obviously, the number of members will grow as the population grows. I don’t think anybody has disagreed with that. You may well have times when you have to readjust the members and the numbers that you have. So I think the question is, what are the democratic principles that you want to drive the system?

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Mr. Miller has raised a very important question about northern Ontario representation as the population shifts. We’re raising some significant issues around trying to make sure there are more women, for example, on the lists. As Rosemary said, some nations have taken the position that there should never be less than 40% male-female. So it’s not a political argument over too many or too few. I think it’s an argument over what you want

them to do and what are the democratic principles under which you will select them?

Mr. Prue: But I have to go back to the alternative then. If we don't have more politicians, if we have the same, then the ridings will—in order to have a list system, an MMP, which you're discussing, there would have to perhaps be 70 ridings in Ontario plus those elected by an MMP on a list. I ask you the question, again, as an experienced provincial politician. The ridings already appear to most of us to be nearly unmanageable at a federal size. Would you advocate having bigger ridings plus the system, or the same number of ridings plus more members? I think there are only two alternatives we have.

Ms. Ecker: Listen, no one has said that the number of politicians or the boundaries are fixed in stone. I think the system has been designed, as the census changes, to change. That's the whole point. You have a system that can adapt and change. So I think, as the next census comes in, as you look at the reforms that you might want to put in, there may be any mix of options that allows you to decide how many politicians you want and how many would be, say, elected directly and how many would be brought in as proportional representation. There are lots of opportunities to increase. The current redistribution is going to increase the members by—

Mr. Prue: Three.

Ms. Ecker: —three. I think as communication mechanisms improve as well that gives those in elected office the ability to communicate more effectively. Years ago, getting on the back of the train and going from community to community was the only way to campaign. There are many options now these days that allow an elected official to reach out to voters that can make you more, if I may use the phrase, cost-effective, or efficient with your time, efficient with your resources. You can have a riding that is perhaps larger. So there are a lot of factors in there that I think need to be considered as you look at the next round of democratic reform and the next round of riding redistribution.

The Chair: Ms. Lankin.

Ms. Lankin: Rosemary just said we should move on because there will be other questions, and there will be.

I just very quickly want to say that whether it's 103 or 130, 21% women is not good enough and it needs to be changed as we go forward. If, because of demographic changes in the province, the size of the province, and therefore redistribution, as Janet has said, that is leading right now to three more seats, if there's an opportunity to ensure that those 106 seats are done more fairly with respect to gender representation, that's the point we're making to you.

As former sitting politicians, we also care about rural/urban splits and about north and south. We understand those dynamics. That's what makes it difficult for you to determine what a system is and how a list would work with sitting seats. We understand because we debate this ourselves. But the bottom line is, it's the gender representation that has to change.

Honestly, this may upset people, but if you were to look to sacrifice something in a go-forward system, I would say don't sacrifice balancing gender representation, because the kind of quality and discussion will be changed forever by a change in gender balance, and other things can be addressed on an ongoing basis over time.

The Chair: Mr. Sterling?

Mr. Sterling: First of all, I'd like to say that having sat in a number of cabinets early in the 1980s, late in the 1990s and early in the 2000s, my feeling is that the role of women within the cabinets that I was involved in became stronger and stronger as time progressed, as well as their role in our caucus.

The whole notion about numbers, which Mr. Prue has brought up—there have been contractions in the number of MPPs in Ontario before, in the 1930s. We contracted from—I forget what the number was, but significantly. I think the motive that Mr. Harris and the government had is somewhat being misconstrued. I believe that the principal motive—actually, you're looking at the author of the contraction—was to match provincial and federal boundaries to make it easier for the election process and to make it easier for the public to understand who the representatives were. It's very, very attractive for the average citizen to know that she or he has one federal member and one provincial member. Going forward, the whole notion of the numbers really, to me, is secondary to the retention of that kind of principle, so that people will understand, for a little while, what their riding is or who their representatives are.

Ms. Lankin: And I assure you, Mr. Sterling, we're equally active at the federal level, and we'll be making these representations to the federal government about size and numbers as well.

Mr. Sterling: The problem I have with endorsing the MMP system for this purpose alone is that the other part of the give-up is that you go away from the whole notion of majority governments. All the expert witnesses yesterday said, "Once you go to this system, you're essentially abandoning majority government." Expert after expert said this. That's the dilemma that I think we're going to find ourselves in.

Another point raised by experts yesterday was this: The improvement in gender equality through moving from first-past-the-post to an MMP system was not that significant. They said it might be anywhere from 0% to 6%, and then there were examples of where in fact that improvement really resulted from other factors within the political system.

Ms. Lankin: That would not be our contention, in terms of looking at the history of where these systems have been brought in. I think there's an important point—

Mr. Sterling: Well, that's what the experts said, Frances. I take your point, but the other point they're making is that within other systems they found other ways of doing this. I guess my challenge to you is to try to find out what those other jurisdictions did, over and above MMP, to improve the gender balance.

Ms. Ecker: But, Norm, if you look at our previous material on that, as I know you have, there are two things: First, we have looked at other jurisdictions to see what has worked; secondly, we are not saying, “Go to a pure”—if I may use that phrase—“proportional representation,” because I agree with you. That’s one of the reasons I started off very much opposed to any kind of PR system, because of that sort of pizza Parliament that you can get out of it. But we are recommending a series of changes. One of them is that some of your seats be done on proportional representation. We have also advocated financial reform; we’ve also advocated some other things, as Rosemary has said. It is a series of things that have to be done to help encourage more women. For example, one of the things that our party has done in the past, as you know, is that we had a program in place to actually assist, on the financial side, women candidates in nomination, because many times that can be a barrier for women in many communities and many things. That was one way that many women were actually able to participate in the nomination process and succeed. It’s not just one option, one solution. We think there need to be several.

The other thing that is important to recognize is that despite the best intentions of parties, of party leaders—and we know John Tory is being very aggressive and assertive on wanting to have more women as part of his next slate of candidates. Premier Harris was extremely successful at bringing more women into the senior ranks within the civil service. All the parties can talk about accomplishments we’ve made, and we’re still looking at 21% or 22% of elected women in the Legislature. So I think it’s time to try something different, because we’re not getting the outcome we all say we want.

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Ms. Lankin: May I add one other point? You talked about the experts that were here, so maybe there’s some battling experts stuff that has to be done, because we’ve done a lot of work and research on this. But a second point you made is that they talked about it being effectively the end of majority government. I would ask the committee to think outside of the experience that we all know and have had, in which we’re defining that by what goes on in the Legislature and how decisions are currently made and what that means in terms of the voting structure. There are lots of examples of stable, long-term governments based on proportional representation, in which there is truly a forced situation of parties working through good, strong committee work like this and coming up with ideas that meet the broad consideration and consensus of the public, because the actual people doing the discussion and the debating are representative of the broad consensus of the public. It is a different type of majority. It is a majority that is reflective of the people, as opposed to just the voting structure in the Legislature. It’s a leap of faith, maybe, for some of us who are used to and comfortable with a structure, but I think it’s an important thing for us to try and explore to see how we might be able to adapt to that.

Ms. Smith: I just wanted some clarification on your support of the mixed-member proportional model. I think you may have clarified it when you were speaking to Mr. Miller. You said you would support a provincial list, not a regional list. What is your organization’s view on the “best loser”? I think that’s how we described it earlier.

Ms. Wynne: The German.

Ms. Smith: The German model, where—

Ms. Speirs: I’m really sorry that I put the word “provincial” in there now, because people are focusing on that. What we mean to say is that the broader the list, the better, because broader lists are more representative and achieve a better result for women. Whether it’s a provincial list or the province is divided into five regions or whatever, as long as it’s a large list, we think it will work for women.

Ms. Smith: Right, because I think the evidence on the regional list has been that it allows for better regional representation. And despite what Ms. Ecker says, no level of technology is going to make Kenora–Rainy River, Nickel Belt or even Nipissing any smaller.

Ms. Ecker: But, Ms. Smith, to be clear, I quite acknowledged the point that Mr. Miller was making about the advantage of looking at your ridings and deciding what principles you want to base that on, and one of the very legitimate principles is the kind of representation you want to have. So wanting to have more from the north or to maintain the north is a perfectly legitimate position to take, as many governments have.

Ms. Smith: OK. Thanks.

Your position on the other model, where you would look at those who come in second as being the list? Are you familiar with that?

Ms. Speirs: Are you talking about the single transferable vote or the alternative vote?

Ms. Smith: Where your list would be the people who came in second or closest. Actually, the people who came in second with the best results of that particular party would form the list. The best losers is what they called it.

Ms. Speirs: Well, I don’t think you’d get the party compensating for what the party lacks in its nominated candidates, which is what we think the list should be used for.

Ms. Smith: Your organization is not proposing, then, that we look at the Brussels model, where the government has legally imposed that there be a rotation of men and women on the list?

Ms. Speirs: Not at this stage. We don’t think you could get away with that in Canada.

Ms. Lankin: There are some of us who might propose that, but that’s not a consensus position in the organization, and we only work on consensus positions in this organization.

Ms. Wynne: Therein lies the rub, because here’s my question: In introducing some proportionality, can you draw a direct line between that and—I mean, you’ve answered this question a little bit, in terms of drawing a direct line between that new proportionality and more women in the system. My concern is that we have to dig below the system and look at the ingrained culture. So

we've got three parties, and one does better than the others on this particular issue of elected representation—or the cabinet, which is your example. I guess I'm wondering, are we ready, are we able to get at those ingrained culture issues? Is the time right? Can this work? If we're not prepared to do some of those other things, the zipper, or something that would force more women, are we working with fertile ground here in Ontario?

Ms. Speirs: I think so. The whole point of our being here is to ask you to lay this down as a principle of electoral reform. We would be asking you to ask the citizens' assembly to make this one of the reasons for reform, the principle of reform.

Interjection.

Ms. Speirs: I think we would like to bring Donna into this, about whether women are ready, but I think what we're asking you to do is to say that this is one of the purposes of electoral reform.

Ms. Wynne: I'd like to hear from Donna too, actually, if she wouldn't mind coming up. I think it's not just whether women are ready; when the citizens' assembly goes about its work and there's a public education campaign, can that education campaign use more women being elected as a selling point? Is the general population ready to say, "That's a good idea"? I think you're suggesting it is.

Ms. Donna Dasko: Absolutely. I think every poll we've done shows that Canadians and Ontarians would like to see more women elected.

Ms. Wynne: So it would be seen as a selling point of a new system.

Ms. Dasko: I think it would be. If Ontarians were to see that a new system would have that outcome or was likely to have that outcome, I think people would support it, and that would be a plus for going forward with a new system.

Ms. Donaldson: If I could just weigh in on this, I think what people accept philosophically and what happens when it really gets down to the whole NIMBY thing are two very different things. That's why I think it's really important to note that as a general sort of issue for our community—I think Donna has some data that suggest that out of six or seven things that were ranked when Canadians were asked how they wanted to reform their democracy, 90%, nine out of 10 people, said that putting women as elected reps was their priority. Donna, you'll have these figures for me. Now, that has to include some men, a significant portion of men, if we're hitting 90%.

Ms. Dasko: Eighty-six per cent of men.

Ms. Donaldson: Eighty-six per cent of men said it. Good; there you go. But that's something that's really important to notice as sort of a broad thing, because where it breaks down—and I would like to echo Rosemary's sentiment. This is not to point the finger at riding associations, but sometimes when it gets right down to the level of the roots of the grass, it just doesn't play out the way everyone honestly expects it to.

Do I mention this one or not? I'm going to do it: The Ontario Liberal Party's decision to adopt a constitutional

reform which gave the leader of the party—who's not always the Premier, right?—the five appointments was accepted at a provincial council, and then it went to the AGM and got 100% endorsement from the rank and file. I'd say that in four out of five of the ridings where that was used, it was not quite as uniform in their backyard as it had been at the AGM or at the provincial council. Everyone agrees that it ought to be so. So when you look at it and think, "OK, you know what? Maybe more broadly we're ready for this, with some codification, and we should just take note of this 86% of men and whatever the percentage of women, but 90% across the board who support this." It's time to put a little muscle into what we all agree ought to be done.

Ms. Wynne: I just want to thank you all for using your stature to promote this issue. Thank you very much, and thanks for coming today.

The Chair: I have just a couple of questions that I would like to pose as well. I know we're running a bit late and I hope everybody is patient with me. I'll be as quick as I can.

I think we've come to at least some type of an evaluation that change of an electoral system is not the only aspect that's going to improve the numbers, even though there is a relationship between the change in an electoral system and at least some percentage point going up when it comes to women's representation.

There are probably two criteria: one of fairness and one of accountability. The fairness piece is to make sure that we have more numbers, to somehow get different approaches so that we can have more equality in government or in the Legislature. The two things that I worry about are the link between the accountability piece and a change in a system. If we keep the same number of seats in Ontario and you have 70 constituencies—this is the model that was brought before us by the law commission. There are 70 members that are constituency members. The accountability piece right now—or if you want to call it the pluses to our system—is that our constituents have a direct link to the member and they therefore know that member and can hold that member to account. If you broaden that—and it's already quite onerous at an average of about 107,000 people—I guess the concern is how you maintain that link between the constituents and then this list that is going to be a less direct link to the constituents without changing the number of seats.

Ms. Speirs: In most MMP systems, the candidates who are elected off the lists also are assigned constituency duties, maybe over two or three constituencies, to supplement the work of the candidates who are elected locally. So I don't see that the link has to be broken.

The Chair: So you don't think it will. That was my question.

I do want to thank you for the work you've done and for coming before this committee to make your presentations. We will endeavour to continue on our path to evaluating the systems. Again, thanks for taking the time to come before us.

We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1624.

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